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SALAR

DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

ساڈھ روزنامہ بنگلور

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Axiom-4 launch delayed for 4th time

NEW DELI, 20 JUNE

NASA has put off the 22 June launch of the Axiom-4 mission carrying Indian astronaut Shubhanshu Shukla and three others to the International Space Station as it required additional time to evaluate operations on the orbital lab after the recent in its Russian section. The Axiom-4 mission was put off multiple times due to a leak in SpaceX's Falcon-9 rocket's boosters, inclement weather in the ascent trajectory and leaks in the aft-most section of Zvezda service module. NASA wanted to ensure the space station was ready for additional crew members as the station's systems are interdependent and interconnected. *—PTI*

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On Yoga day, India plans events in 191 countries

NEW DELHI, 20 JUNE

India is set to celebrate the 10th International Day of Yoga on today with over 2,000 events across 1,300 cities in 191 countries. Organised by the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR), the celebrations will showcase yoga's global appeal and India's cultural heritage. A special event, 'Yoga Bandhan', will feature 17 yoga gurus from 15 countries leading sessions in Delhi, Lucknow, Varanasi and more. The theme, 'Yoga for One Earth, One Health', highlights the link between health, sustainability and the environment, reflecting India's G20 vision. The Indian High Commission in Pakistan will also hold an event in Islamabad. *—PTI*

Amit Shah inaugurates varsity campus in City

BENGALURU, 20 JUNE

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Friday inaugurated the Adichunchanagiri University (ACU) Bengaluru campus. Speaking at the event, he lauded Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his government for its "holistic" approach in addressing health issues faced by the public. "In a way, it is being ensured that a citizen doesn't fall ill from the time he/she is in the mother's womb until the person becomes a complete citizen, and in case the person is ill, he takes treatment without paying a higher price for it," he said. Shah lauded the Adichunchanagiri Mutt and its institutions for improving health in villages. *—PTI*

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Modi launches slew of projects in Bihar & Odisha

BHUBANESWAR, 20 JUNE

Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated significant development projects in Odisha and Bihar, while criticising the Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) over an alleged insult to Babasaheb Ambedkar. In Bhubaneswar, Modi launched 105 projects worth over Rs 18,600 crore, covering drinking water, irrigation, health, roads, highways, and rail infrastructure. He also unveiled the "Odisha Vision Document", aiming to grow the state's economy to USD 500 billion by 2036 and USD 1.5 trillion by 2047. Additionally, Modi launched "Baraputra Aitihya Gram Yojana" to develop memorials for Odia icons and honoured women achievers under '"Lakhpati Didis" initiative. *—PTI*

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16B passwords leaked in one of the largest scams

Gmail to Instagram, criminals have 'unprecedent access'

BENGALURU, 20 JUNE

Nearly 16 billion passwords were leaked, in one of the largest internet scams according to a report by Cybernews and Forbes. The leak reportedly includes login credentials from personal email and social media accounts, such as Facebook and Instagram to developer tools like GitHub, and in some cases, even government platforms.

Thirty exposed datasets of at least 3.5 billion records each were found, bringing the total number of compromised records to 16 billion, according to Vilius Petkauskas, Cybernews author.

Researchers claim that most of the data in the leaked datasets is a mix of details from stealer malware, credential stuffing sets, and repackaged leaks, Cybernews reported.

However, it is likely that overlapping records were present, meaning it's impossible to tell how many people or accounts were actually exposed.

PHOTO: FREEPIK

Notably, the leaked data does not include recycled or old data. Most of the credentials were newly harvested and are therefore usable by hackers. This puts millions of users at risk of cybercrime, including identity theft, phishing attacks, and account hijacking.

"Credentials we've seen in infostealer logs contained login URLs to Apple, Facebook, and Google login pages," Bob Diachenko from Cybernews said.

"This is not just a leak – it's a blueprint for mass exploitation. With over 16 billion login records exposed, cybercriminals now have unprecedented access to personal credentials that can be used for account takeover, identity theft, and highly targeted phishing. What's especially concerning is the structure and recency of these datasets – these aren't just old breaches being recycled. This is fresh, weaponisable intelligence at scale," the researchers said.

- The leaked data does not include recycled or old data. Most of the credentials were newly harvested and are therefore usable by hackers. Millions of users are at risk

According to Cybernews, the silver lining was that all of the datasets were exposed only briefly.

It is unclear who owns the leaked data, Forbes reported. After all, cybercriminals love massive datasets as aggregated collections allow them to scale up various types of attacks, such as identity theft, phishing schemes, and unauthorised access, it added.

—Salar News with agencies

ED withdraws summons to senior lawyer

NEW DELHI, 20 JUNE

The Enforcement Directorate on Friday withdrew its summons to a senior lawyer for reportedly giving legal advice in a case after the Supreme Court Advocates on Record Association (SCAORA) wrote to the Chief Justice of India for taking note of the action.

The ED wrote to senior advocate Pratap Venugopal, intimating him that the summons issued to him were withdrawn with "immediate effect".

SCAORA president Vipin Nair had earlier written to CJI BR Gavai on the "deeply disquieting development" having "serious ramifications for the independence of the legal profession and the foundational principle of lawyer-client confidentiality".

"It has come to our notice that senior advocate Pratap Venugopal, has received on 19 June, a summons by ED under Section 50 of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) in its investigation into the Employee Stock Option Plan (ESOP)," the letter said. Venugopal, was the advocate-on-record in the case.

Section 50 of the PMLA deals with "powers of authorities regarding summons, production of documents and to give evidence, etc."

"It would be imperative to mention that a similar notice was earlier issued by the ED to senior advocate Arvind Data, albeit withdrawn subsequently," it added.

Venugopal was said to be a widely respected member of the legal fraternity with an "impeccable" sincerity and professional commitment.

"These actions, by the ED, we believe, amount to an impermissible transgression of the sacrosanct lawyer-client privilege, and pose a serious threat to the autonomy and fearless functioning of advocates. *—PTI*

Iran lifts airspace ban to evacuate 1K Indians

NEW DELHI, 20 JUNE

In a special gesture, Iran has lifted airspace restrictions for three charter flights to evacuate about 1,000 Indian nationals, mostly students, from the Iranian city of Mashhad.

Mohammad Javad Hosseini, the Deputy Chief at the Iranian Embassy, said more evacuation flights could be operated in the coming days if required.

The Indian nationals were moved to Mashad from Tehran following Israeli attacks on the Iranian capital. The evacuation flights, to be operated by Iranian airline Mahan, are being arranged by New Delhi.

India launched Operation Sindhu on Wednesday to bring back its nationals from Iran and Israel. The first chartered flight carrying Indians are set to land in Delhi, Friday. "The first flight will land tonight (Friday) at the New Delhi and there will be two more flights on Saturday."

- India launched Operation Sindhu to bring back its nationals from Iran and Israel. MEA said a few students were injured in Iran after an Israel airstrike hit a dormitory

Hosseini said Tehran is in close contact with the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) and the Indian embassy in Tehran.

He said that all Indians in Iran are safe, but a few students sustained injuries after an Israeli air strike hit a dormitory in Tehran. *—PTI*

>>>More on Pages 3, 5, 6

Indian students returning from Iran via Armenia, under an evacuation operation facilitated by the Government of India **PHOTO: X**

K'taka Cong MLA claims bribery in house allotment

BENGALURU, 20 JUNE

Congress MLA from Aland BR Patil's purported phone conversation expressing displeasure about alleged bribery in the allotment of houses seems to have caused embarrassment to his own party government in Karnataka, with the Opposition latching on to the issue to target it.

In the purported leaked conversation played by local channels, Patil, who is also Karnataka State Policy and Planning Commission Deputy Chairman, has expressed his discontent with Housing Minister Zameer Ahmed Khan's personal secretary Sarfaraz Khan, alleging that the houses under Rajiv Gandhi Housing Corporation Limited were being allotted to those who paid bribes in his constituency.

While some senior ministers in the government seemed hesitant to make any comments on the issue, the BJP and JD(S) leaders alleged that commission, bribery and corruption were rampant in this government.

BJP even demanded Chief Minister Siddaramaiah seek Minister Khan's resignation and order a judicial inquiry.

Home Minister G Parameshwara said if concerned Minister Khan is informed as to where and at what level things have happened, he will look into it and take necessary action.

Meanwhile, Siddaramaiah said the scheme was in line with the Centre's guidelines. *—PTI*

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China, Pakistan & Bangladesh forge new trilateral cooperation

BEIJING, 20 JUNE

China, Pakistan, and Bangladesh have committed to enhancing cooperation rooted in good-neighbourliness, equality, and mutual trust during their inaugural trilateral meeting, held in Kunming, China.

The meeting comes as China is reportedly set to supply 40 Shenyang J-35 fifth-generation stealth fighter jets to Pakistan.

The FC-31 is an export variant of the J-35 and is widely understood to possess reduced capability compared to the frontline aircraft serving the People's Liberation Army Navy Air Force (PLANAF).

The meeting featured Chinese Vice Foreign Minister Sun Weidong, along with Bangladesh's Acting Foreign Secretary Ruhul Alam Siddique and Pakistan's Additional Foreign Secretary Imran Ahmed Siddiqui, with Pakistan's Foreign Secretary Amna Baloch participating via video link.

Bangladesh's Ruhul Alam Siddique, China's Sun Weidong and Pakistan's Imran Ahmed Siddiqui **PHOTO: X**

The gathering underscores China's strategic initiative to foster closer ties amongst these South Asian nations, coinciding with a recent trilateral dialogue involving Pakistan and Afghanistan. Sun Weidong highlighted the importance of Bangladesh and Pakistan as crucial partners in the Belt and Road Initiative, aiming for regional peace and development. *—PTI*

HAL to make pvt small Indian rockets

BENGALURU, 20 JUNE

Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) has secured the bid for the transfer of technology of the Small Satellite Launch Vehicle (SSLV), developed by ISRO, to launch satellites weighing up to 500 kg into low Earth orbit. The announcement was made by Pawan Goenka, Chairman of the Indian National Space Promotion and Authorisation Centre, during a virtual press conference.

City's HAL was the sole bidder for the project, surpassing two competing consortia led by Alpha Design Technologies, which is supported by Adani Defence Systems and Technologies, as well as Bharat Dynamics Limited, a state-owned enterprise. *—PTI*

CONG NEXT AT 18%

'BJP spent 45% of 2024 LS poll expenses'

NEW DELHI, 20 JUNE

The BJP spent nearly Rs 1,494 crore, accounting for 44.56 per cent of the total election expenditure, during the 2024 Lok Sabha election, poll rights body the Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR) said on Friday.

The Congress followed next with Rs 620 crore or 18.5 per cent of the total expenses among the 32 national and regional parties whose records were analysed, the ADR said.

Together, these parties spent Rs 3,352.81 crore during the Lok Sabha and simultaneous Assembly elections in Andhra Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Odisha and Sikkim between 16 March and 6 June, 2024. National parties accounted for more than Rs 2,204 crore (65.75 per cent) of this expenditure.

Of the total travel expenses of Rs 795 crore, BJP spent Rs 765 crore (96.22 per cent) on ferrying high-profile party faces **PHOTO: PTI**

The analysis is based on the mandatory expenditure statements political parties file with the Election Commission (EC) .

Publicity topped the list of expenses, with the parties spending Rs 2,008 crore, or more than 53 per cent, of their total declared expenditure on it.

Travel expenses came next at Rs 795 crore, followed by Rs 402 crore in lump-sum payments to candidates. The parties also spent over Rs 132 crore on virtual campaigns and Rs 28 crore on publishing the criminal antecedents of their candidates.

Of the Rs 795 crore the BJP spent on travel, Rs 765 crore (96.22 per cent) went toward ferrying high-profile party BJP faces, with just Rs 30 crore spent on the other leaders.

However, the ADR flagged several concerns on transparency. Statements from 21 parties, including the NCP, CPI, JMM and Shiv Sena (UBT), were unavailable on the EC's website. Expenditure statements of the RJD, LJP(RV), AJSU, KC(M) are not available for the concerned elections in Andhra Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh and Odisha.

Two parties -- Jammu and Kashmir PDP and Kerala Congress (M) -- declared zero expenditure despite contesting. *—PTI*

Indian strikes made us ask for ceasefire: Pak DyPM

BENGALURU, 20 JUNE

Pakistan's Deputy Prime Minister, Ishaq Dar admitted that Islamabad had requested a ceasefire after Indian forces attacked two of the country's key air bases we.

In a viral video Dar said that India launched missile strikes on the Nur Khan Air Base and Shorkot Air Base. It was at this juncture that Pakistan reached out to the US for its intervention and also took assistance from Saudi Arabia. Islamabad admitted to its jet being damaged in the Indian strikes.

"Within 45 minutes, Saudi Prince Faisal called me. He asked if he was authorised to talk to (India's External Affairs Minister) S Jaishankar and convey that we are ready if they (India) stop. I said yes, brother, you can. He then called me back, saying he had conveyed the same to Jaishankar," Dar said.

Legacy and social media alike interpret Dar's remarks to mean that Pakistan was scrambling for a ceasefire following India's strikes on its bases, a change of tone from the Islamabad's previous rhetoric about the armed conflict. *—Agencies*

Minister calls for pruning of trees post techie's death

BENGALURU, 20 JUNE

State Forest Minister, Eshwar Khandre, has called on forest officials to identify and prune branches of hazardous trees during the monsoon season. This directive follows the tragic death of Akshay, 29, who was killed when a tree branch fell on him. Khandre highlighted that tall and shallow-rooted trees are particularly vulnerable to falling during heavy rains and winds, exacerbated by concrete, stone slabs, and tiles restricting root water absorption. He noted the National Green Tribunal's orders on this issue, along with an official state government directive. The Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) was instructed to remove concrete structures around trees and ensure a soil radius of one metre when planting saplings. *—PTI*

PHOTO: ANI

Tiger kills woman near Bandipur reserve

CHAMARAJANAGARA, 20 JUNE

A 32-year-old woman, Puttamma from Gundlupet taluk in Chamarajanagara district, was killed by a tiger near the Omkar range in Bandipur Tiger Reserve on Thursday afternoon. She was herding cattle when the tiger attacked and dragged her around 100 metres. Villagers quickly informed the forest department, which recovered her body. After a post-mortem, it will be handed to her family. Bandipur Conservator of Forest, Prabhakaran, confirmed the death was due to a tiger attack. A search operation is underway to locate the tiger involved. Camera traps have also been installed to monitor tiger movements in the area. Authorities urge locals to remain cautious while moving near the reserve. *—PTI*

District minister condemned for filing 'false cases'

MYSURU, 20 JUNE

Madiga Meesalathi Horata Samithi (MMHS) members on Friday condemned district minister HC Mahadevappa for filing false case against the organisation's members and hit back at Congress MLA Thimmaiah for spreading "false allegations." Advocate Arunkumar urged Mahadevappa to stop filing "false cases" against him and Bhaskarprasad, who is spearheading the campaign in the State, given that they were fighting for internal reservation for their community. Bhaskarprasad attacked Thimmaiah for diverting the attention of Madigas by spreading false allegations against him. "Thimmaiah must stop misleading the community," he said. ***—Salar News***

Swedish firm Epiroc to expand to State

BENGALURU, 20 JUNE

Karnataka's Minister for Large and Medium Industries and Infrastructure Development, MB Patil, met with Swedish firm Epiroc during a roadshow in Sweden to discuss expansion plans in the State. The meeting highlighted Karnataka's efforts to attract global investment and make it a hub for advanced manufacturing and innovation. Arun Kumar, head of Epiroc's India operations, outlined the company's vision, including a capital investment of Rs 500 crore in 2025 and and Rs 1,000 crore by 2030. Patil highlighted Karnataka's industrial strengths, skilled workforce, and supportive ecosystem, making it ideal for Epiroc's manufacturing growth. Epiroc's Bangalore R&D centre employs over 500 staff and accounts for 25 per cent of the company's total global researc output.*—PTI*

M'rashtra panel to check border issues

This comes amid dispute on Hemavathi dam height increase & language row in border areas

BELAGAVI, 20 JUNE

Maharashtra has reformed its High Power Committee on border dispute with Karnataka, which consists of members from all political parties, with Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis taking the leadership. Former chief minister Eknath Shinde led the previous committee.

Vikas Kalaghtagi, a spokesperson for the Maharashtra Ekikaran Samiti (MES), a pro-Maharashtrian organisation in Karnataka, said that though no one from the organisation was in the committee, it could advice as the matter was related to Marathis in Karnataka. "We have been authorised to make suggestions and guide the committee as we know more about the dispute," Kalaghtagi said.

Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis will head the panel, ex-CM Eknath Shinde led it earlier *PHOTO: PTI*

The 18-member committee includes Shinde, Ajit Pawar, Sharad Pawar, Pruthiviraj Chauhan and Narayan Rane. Border expert Prof. Avinash Kolhe and ministers Chandrakant Dada Patil and Shamburaje Desai are in the coordinating team that deals with the MES.

> Vikas Kalaghtagi, a spokesperson for the Maharashtra Ekikaran Samiti (MES), a pro-Maharashtrian organisation in Karnataka, said that though no one from the organisation was in the committee, it could advice as the matter was related to Marathis

Maharashtra, in a suit filed at the Supreme Court in 2004, claimed its rights over 846 places in Karnataka, including Belagavi, Nippani, Khanapur, Karwar, Bidar and Balki.

Reacting to the development, the Kannada organisations in Belagavi alleged that the State government is taking the matter lightly, unlike Maharashtra. Kannada Organisations' Action Committee convenor Ashok Chandergi said Maharashtra in its suit made the Union government as respondent No. 1 and Karnataka as No. 2.

Then chief minister Dharam Singh formed the Border Legal Advisory Committee in 2004, which was renamed as Border Protection Committee (BPC) in 2015. Minister HK Patil was the border in-charge minister when the BPC was formed. *—Salar News*

Who is in the committee?

Maharasthra CM Fadnavis heads the 18-member committee, which also includes his deputies Eknath Shinde and Ajit Pawar and former CMs Narayan Rane, Sharad Pawar and Prithviraj Chavan. NCP (SP) MLAs Rohit Patil and Jayant Patil, ministers Chandrakant Patil, Shambhuraj Desai, Prakash Abitkar, Suresh Khade. Leaders of Opposition are also in the committee.

Shah lauds PM in Bengaluru

BENGALURU, 20 JUNE

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Friday lauded Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his government for its "holistic" approach in addressing health issues faced by the public. He was speaking after inaugurating the Adichunchanagiri University (ACU) Bengaluru campus.

"Our leader Modi had said several years ago in Gujarat that poverty's biggest issue is illness, and the cost of treatment; the administration has to provide for the treatment of illness for the poor. I can say with pride today that Modi, when he became the Prime Minister, has fulfilled it by providing 60 crore poor with free treatment up to Rs 5 lakh," Shah said.

The Modi government has addressed the problem of health with a holistic view, with initiatives like building toilets in about 12 crore houses, through Fit India movement, Yoga Day, Mission Indradanush and Poshan Abhiyaan, Ayushman Bharat Bhartiya Janaushadhi Pariyojana, he added.

Lauding Adichunchanagiri Mutt for their work in improving health in villages, providing free treatment for the poor, and imparting quality education, Shah praised the Nirmalanandanatha Swamiji for keeping up with the 1,800-year-old Mutt traditions.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah with ministers HD Kumaraswamy, V Somanna, Sharan Prakash Patil, LOP leader R Ashoka at the opening of BGS Medical College in Bengaluru on Friday *PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD*

'Fight corrupt Cong'

BJP President BY Vijayendra said that Shah suggested the State unit to intensify the fight against the "corrupt" Congress government.

Vijayendra said that ahead of the Assembly session, BJP will hold discussions with JD(S) leader HD Kumaraswamy and legislators regarding having a committee for proper coordination between the two parties.

Keeping the Zilla and Taluk Panchayat polls in mind and at a time when the party has to fight against the government on the streets, the BJP has to resolve internal issues and stand united. *—PTI*

HDK will never be CM: DKS

Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar hit out at Union Minister HD Kumaraswamy saying he will neither form a government in the State. Speaking to reporters at his Sadashivanagar residence, he said, "Kumaraswamy had called on his supporters to get ready for a BJP-JDS government. I had then replied to him stating that I will present him a suit if he won the election and formed the government in 2028." He was replying to a reporter who Kumaraswamy's statement that he wasn't that poor to take clothes from him.

If I speak, govt will shake: Cong MLA

BENGALURU, 20 JUNE

Aland Congress MLA BR Patil's alleged leaked audio has sent shock waves in Karnataka's political corridors. In it, the person who is said to be Patil can be heard telling the minister's personal secretary, "Don't take me wrong, it is surprising that those who are giving money are getting houses in Rajiv Gandhi Housing Corporation... whether dandha (business) is happening here?"

To this, personal secretary Sarfaraz asks the MLA to provide details and assures that action will be taken immediately. He also tries to explain stating that "we have not done like that. If someone has done so, we will send them behind bars."

Patil says, "Why will I make allegations against my own government?"

Sarfaraz says, "There are no houses, then how can they be allotted?"

Patil then says, "I had sent a letter and nothing happened. The same letter Gram Panchayat Chairman took from me and he gave money and the houses were allotted. If this is the case, what will happen to our respect?"

Patil points out that 950 houses, including 200 houses in Munnalli village, 100 in Darga Shiroor, 200 in Dhangapura, 200 in Kavalaga, 200 in Madiyal villages were allotted after taking money.

"If I open my mouth the government will shake," he adds.

Responding to the audio, JD(S) leader and Union Minister HD Kumaraswamy asked, "are you surprised?"

State BJP President BY Vijayendra said since Congress came to power, they've turned the government into an ATM for their high command, and corruption is rampant. "Earlier they accused BJP of 40 per cent corruption. Today, if you ask the common man, they say it's 100 per cent corrupt now. Even Congress MLAs are now exposing the rampant corruption," he said. *—PTI*

Yadgir lawyer alleges caste-based attack

YADGIR, 20 JUNE

A young Dalit lawyer was attacked by people belonging to the upper caste in Nagaral village in Yadgir district.

The incident occurred on 17 June when the victim, Durgappa Basappa Hosamani, 28, and his uncle Vijaykumar Hosamani were walking near Nagaral Cross. The accused Arjun Devadi and Mallappa Hulakal, from Kuruba caste, allegedly verbally attacked Hosamani. The accused was reportedly drunk.

"I had come to my native village from Bengaluru. Two peopel belonging to the Kuruba caste began verbally abusing me. They said how I dared to walk in front of them. When I questioned them, they began attacking," Hosamani said.

While Arjun grabbed the victim's shirt collar, Mallayya hit him on the head with his slipper. When his uncle tried to intervene, the assailants shoved them to the ground and kicked them.

Though locals rescued them and took them to hospital, the accused threatened to kill them the next time.

Hosamani filed a complaint with the police. A case was registered against the two accused under various sections of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita. *—Salar News*

19 BARS IN CITY RUN ILLEGALLY

BENGALURU, 20 JUNE

In a late-night operation, the City Police found violations of the Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products Act (COTPA) at 19 bars and restaurants across the West zone.

The raids took place after Commissioner Seemanth Kumar Singh received reports of illegal employment of women servers and other unlawful activities. Eleven police teams raided establishments in Upparpet, Cottonpet, Kalasipalya, Cubbon Park and Ashok Nagar. Officials reported that many bars employed women dressed provocatively, but failed to appoint female security personnel, and neglected kitchen cleanliness. They also did not have smoking areas and opened beyond permitted hours.

Patrons breaching COTPA regulations were fined, with reports sent to respective police stations. The police confirmed ongoing monitoring of these venues and warned of potential licence cancellations for repeat offences. The public is urged to report such instances via helpline 112. *—PTI*

A fisherman casts a net to catch fish in Krishna River *PHOTO: PTI*

Krishna river in spate due to M'rashtra rains

BELAGAVI, 20 JUNE

Rains in Maharashtra's south and western ghat regions have resulted in Krishna river's water level gradually rising, thereby increasing the chance of floods in Karnataka's Belagavi, Bagalkot, Raichur and Yadagiri districts.

Hipparagi barrage in Jamakhandi of Bagalkot district received 79,800 cusecs of inflow on 19 June and to maintain water level in the barrage 79,050 cusecs water was released in the Narayanpur reservoir in Yadagiri district from the Krishna. The Narayanpur reservoir's inflow was 75,000 cusecs on 19 June.

As the dam had less water, no out flow was made.

The district administrations of Yadagiri and Raichur cautioned the public against going near the river and asked those residing on its banks to shift to safer places in case of floods. The administrations also identified places to shelter the affected.

The India Metrological Department (IMD) predicted heavy rains in Uttara Kannada, Dakshina Kannada and Udupi till 26 June.

To maintain water level in Karnataka's largest reservoir at Alamatti Dam, 70,440 cusecs water was released to the Narayanpur reservoir from the Krishna on Friday. The Krishna and Doodhaganga rivers received 60,000 cusecs and 15,000 cusecs of water from Maharashtra's Radhanagari reservoir respectively. *—Salar News*

MSME LENDERS ALLEGEDLY KIDNAP GIRL

MYSURU, 20 JUNE

A seven-year-old girl was allegedly abducted by two micro finance executives in Jalahalli in T Narasipura taluk in Mysuru district, marking a continuation of harassment by money lenders. The girl was allegedly kidnapped because her parents faulted on one monthly payment.

Couple Prameela and Naveen had taken a Rs 30,000 loan from Bajaj Finance Limited. Although they had paid 13 monthly instalments, the couple faulted on the 14th instalment of Rs 1,200 this month.

In response, two alleged micro finance executives from the agency visited their village. Upon not finding the mother at home the pair kidnapped the minor.

The girl was staying with her grand-parent's in another neighbouring village in Malavalli taluk when she was abducted.

The executives were accused of scolding the girl for their parents faulting payments.

The incident came to light when the case reached the child welfare committee.

Her parents approached the Malavalli police on Friday and filed a complaint, according to the police. At the time of publishing, an FIR has not been filed. *—Salar News*

LIVES IN THE LURCH

Bike taxi riders urge govt to reverse crackdown

BENGALURU, 20 JUNE

A group of 110 bike taxi riders from Namma Bike Taxi Association met State Health Minister Dinesh Gundu Rao and Dasarahalli MLA S Muniraju on Thursday, urging the government to reverse its crackdown on bike taxis.

Representing thousands of bike taxi riders in the State, the delegation submitted a petition demanding legal recognition of bike taxis and a clear policy framework to end ongoing harassment.

The meeting follows a series of open letters addressed to Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge, and MP Rahul Gandhi, none of which received a response.

The same Congress government passed a Gig Worker Welfare Bill just last month, while simultaneously dismantling a sector that offers flexible income to thousands.

Drivers also raised alarm over growing intimidation by auto unions. One auto union leader has publicly urged members to prevent bike taxi protests and has even targeted figures like Mohandas Pai for speaking in support.

Namma Bike Taxi Association President Mohammed Salim was denied permission to protest at Freedom Park. Salim said, "My phone won't stop ringing. 250 to 300 drivers call me every day, asking for help. Should we lose our livelihoods because the government has no policy for bike taxis? We need regulation, not a ban."

A 37-year old rider, said, "I've borrowed twice already this month. My daughter's school is asking for fees, and I have nothing left."

Another 26-year-old rider added, "Delivery partners can use the same bike to deliver food--but I get fined for giving someone a ride. Where's the logic in that?"

Commuters too hit back. Sneha, a college student, said, "I used to pay Rs 50 on a bike taxi, now autos charge Rs 100 to Rs 150 for the same distance." Bala, a daily commuter, said, "Why ban something without asking citizens first?" *—ANI*

Karnataka bike taxi riders urge government for legal recognition and policy framework amid crackdown, facing growing desperation and financial challenges *PHOTO: PTI*

AIR INDIA BOOKINGS DOWN BY 20%

After Dreamliner crash, Air India fares have dipped up to 15%; 8 flights cancelled

NEW DELHI/MUMBAI, 20 JUNE

Bookings for Air India flights have declined by around 20 per cent on domestic as well as international routes while the average fares have dropped by 8-15 per cent in the aftermath of the Boeing 787-8 Dreamliner crash last week, Indian Association of Tour Operators (IATO) President Ravi Gosain said on Friday.

An Air India spokesperson did not respond to a query seeking comments from the airline.

A London-bound Air India flight, AI-171 carrying 242 passengers and crew members crashed in Ahmedabad on 12 June. All but one on board the plane died along with nearly 29 on the ground when the aircraft smashed into a medical complex in Meghaninagar area of the city shortly after takeoff.

The IATO President shared that there has been a moderate adjustment in fares across key Air India routes.

He informed that the increase in cancellations was 15–18 per cent internationally, and 8–10 per cent domestically over the past week. However, this trend may normalize in the coming days as no systemic safety issue has been reported and authorities like DGCA reaffirm Air India's compliance with international safety standards.

The IATO President shared that there has been a moderate adjustment in fares across key Air India routes PHOTO: PTI

> **Where there is any doubt, we will not release aircraft - of any type - for service**
>
> -Campbell Wilson, Air India CEO and Managing Director

Meanwhile, Air India has cancelled eight flights, including four international services, on Friday due to enhanced maintenance and operational reasons, the airline said.

Air India said its teams on the ground are making alternative arrangements for the passengers to fly to their respective destinations at the earliest.

The international flights to be cancelled were AI906 from Dubai to Chennai, AI308 from Delhi to Melbourne, AI309 from Melbourne to Delhi, and AI2204 from Dubai to Hyderabad.

Air India said four domestic flights -- AI874 from Pune to Delhi, AI456 from Ahmedabad to Delhi, AI-2872 from Hyderabad to Mumbai, and AI571 from Chennai to Mumbai -- have been cancelled. —*PTI*

PHOTO: ANI

Indigo flight returns after technical glitch

CHENNAI, 20 JUNE

An Indigo flight bound for Madurai returned to Chennai shortly after take-off due to a mid-air technical snag. The pilot, after approximately 30 minutes of flight, requested to return and safely landed back in Chennai. The aircraft, carrying 68 passengers, was deplaned under safety protocols. An airline spokesperson confirmed that flight 6E7167 returned due to a technical issue, and passengers are being accommodated on alternative flights to Madurai. —*PTI*

Nilambur bypoll sees slightly higher voter turnout

MALAPPURAM, 20 JUNE

Polling percentage in the Nilambur Assembly constituency bypoll slightly exceeded the turnout recorded during the 2021 elections in the state, according to the final figures released by the Election Commission on Friday. The final turnout in the bypoll stands at 75.27 per cent, slightly more than the 75.20 per cent polling recorded in the constituency in the 2021 Assembly elections. Figures released by late Thursday night showed the turnout to be 73.26 per cent. The votes would be counted on 23 June. Polling, which commenced at 7 am on Thursday amidst tight security arrangements, was peaceful. Central security forces and state police were deployed, and live monitoring was arranged through extensive webcasting system during polling. —*PTI*

PHOTO: ANI

Modi to join Yoga Day celebration in AP tomorrow

AMARAVATI, 20 JUNE

Prime Minister Narendra Modi is set to participate in a grand International Yoga Day event on 21 June in Andhra Pradesh. The gathering will take place along a 26-km corridor from RK Beach in Visakhapatnam to Bhogapuram, aiming to host over 300,000 participants performing yoga simultaneously. Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu announced plans to set Guinness World Records, including the largest group performing Surya Namaskars, with 25,000 tribal students participating for 108 minutes. The state has initiated a 'Yogandhra' campaign, involving 15,000 competitions and one crore certified participants leading up to the event. Extensive preparations include 326 compartments for participants, over 1.3 lakh yoga locations, and significant security measures with 10,000 police personnel in place. —*PTI*

Delhi-Pune AI flight suffers bird hit, return journey cancelled

Mumbai, 20 June

An Air India flight from Delhi to Pune encountered a bird strike on Friday, leading to the cancellation of its return service. The aircraft landed safely in Pune, where the incident was detected. Additionally, the airline announced a reduction of 38 international flights and suspension of routes to Nairobi and London until 15 July. —*PTI*

AI crash: 220 victims identified, 202 bodies handed over to kin

AHMEDABAD, 20 JUNE

More than a week after the Air India AI-171 crash in Ahmedabad killed 270 people, 220 victims have been identified through DNA testing, Gujarat Health Minister Rushikesh Patel said. The London-bound flight crashed on 12 June, killing all but one onboard and 29 people on the ground. So far, 202 bodies have been handed over to families, including 160 Indians, 34 Britons, seven Portuguese, and one Canadian. —*PTI*

DNA confirms death of woman & granddaughter

AHMEDABAD, 20 JUNE

The mystery of a missing woman and her granddaughter ended after DNA tests confirmed their deaths in the 12 June Air India crash in Meghaninagar, Ahmedabad. Sarlaben Thakor, 52, a cook at the BJ Medical College hostel mess, and two-year-old Aadhya were inside when the aircraft struck. Her son Ravi and wife Lalita had left moments earlier to deliver tiffin's. The victims' bodies were identified and handed over to the grieving family on Thursday. The crash claimed 270 lives in total. —*PTI*

Modi inaugurates 105 projects in Odisha

BHUBANESWAR, 20 JUNE

On Friday, Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated significant development projects in Odisha and Bihar, while criticising the Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) over an alleged insult to Babasaheb Ambedkar.

In Bhubaneswar, Modi launched 105 projects worth over Rs 18,600 crore, covering drinking water, irrigation, health, roads, highways, and rail infrastructure. He inaugurated the Sonepur-Purunakatak railway line and flagged off the first passenger train to Boudh. The Prime Minister also unveiled the 'Odisha Vision Document', aiming to grow the state's economy to USD 500 billion by 2036 and USD 1.5 trillion by 2047. Additionally, Modi launched the 'Baraputra Aitihya Gram Yojana' to develop memorials for Odia icons and honoured women achievers under the 'Lakhpati Didis' initiative.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi with Odisha Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi during a programme organised to mark the completion of one year of BJP government in the state, in Bhubaneswar PHOTO: PTI

In Bihar's Siwan district, Modi launched 28 projects worth over Rs 5,900 crore, including the Vaishali–Deoria railway line and a new Vande Bharat Express service connecting Patna to Gorakhpur. He flagged off a locomotive built for export to Guinea and inaugurated sewage treatment plants under the Namami Gange project. Modi also laid the foundation for a 500 MWh battery energy storage system to enhance power supply reliability and distributed housing benefits under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana.

> **I told the US President, thank you for the invitation. It is very important for me to go to the land of Mahaprabhu and hence I politely declined his invitation.**
>
> -Narendra Modi, Prime Minister

During a rally in Siwan, Modi criticised the RJD for disrespecting Ambedkar, referencing a recent incident involving a portrait placed near Lalu Prasad's feet. The RJD denied any insult, attributing the controversy to a camera angle. The Bihar Scheduled Castes commission has issued a notice to Prasad, warning of legal action if no satisfactory response is received. —*PTI*

DURING US VISIT

Pak Army Chief advocates for regional peace

ISLAMABAD, 20 JUNE

Pakistan's Chief of Army Staff, General Asim Munir, has reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to regional peace and a rules-based international order during discussions in Washington, DC, with various American scholars, policy analysts, and media representatives.

This comes after a meeting with former US President Donald Trump earlier in the week.

The Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) reported that the interactions provided a platform for General Munir to articulate Pakistan's positions on significant global and regional issues, especially in the wake of heightened tensions following the deadly Pahalgam terror attack on 22 April.

In his statements, Munir emphasised Pakistan's unwavering dedication to stability and highlighted the country's sacrifices in the global fight against terrorism. He also discussed Pakistan's strategic military operations in response to external threats, including the Indian military actions post-Pahalgam.

Furthermore, he invited foreign investment in Pakistan's underutilised sectors, such as information technology, agriculture, and mining. —*PTI*

DAILY LIFE HIT IN CHURACHANDPUR AS TRIBAL GROUP ENFORCES SHUTDOWN

IMPHAL, 20 JUNE

Daily life in Manipur's Churachandpur district was severely disrupted on Friday as activists from a tribal organisation initiated an indefinite shutdown to protest the killing of an elderly Kuki woman. Hoikholhing Haokip was fatally shot during a crossfire involving security forces and unidentified armed assailants.

Shops and markets remained closed, while vehicular traffic came to a standstill as members of the Indigenous Tribal Leaders Forum (ITLF), including women, erected roadblocks throughout the district. Poor attendance at government offices was reported, and educational institutions were also shut for the day.

The protest was triggered by a gunfight that erupted when security personnel, engaged in operations in the Langchingmanbi and Heichanglok areas, came under fire from armed men. The ITLF has since demanded concrete measures from the central government to safeguard tribal communities and their lands, alongside calling for an independent investigation into violations of buffer zones in conflict-affected regions.

Since May 2023, ethnic violence between Meiteis and Kuki-Zo groups has resulted in over 260 deaths and thousands displaced. —*PTI*

English an empowering tool: Rahul hits back at Shah's remark

NEW DELHI, 20 JUNE

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi and Kerala ministers have criticised Union Home Minister Amit Shah's reported remarks suggesting English speakers in India will soon feel ashamed.

Gandhi described English as an empowering tool and a bridge to opportunity, not something shameful or restrictive. He accused the BJP-RSS of wanting to prevent poor children from learning English to stop them from questioning and achieving equality. Gandhi emphasised that English, alongside mother tongues, is essential for employment and confidence in today's globalised world.

Kerala Higher Education Minister R Bindu and General Education Minister V Sivankutty condemned Shah's comments as narrow-minded and restrictive. Bindu highlighted English as the world's most widely used language, vital for communication and the internet, warning that discouraging its learning would limit young people's horizons.

Rahul Gandhi PHOTO: PTI

- Gandhi emphasised that English, alongside mother tongues, is essential for employment and confidence in today's globalised world.

Sivankutty stressed that no language is superior and that English aids national progress. Both ministers underscored India's rich linguistic diversity and opposed any imposition of Hindi as a single national language.

They reaffirmed Kerala's commitment to protecting linguistic pluralism and allowing students to freely choose which languages to study. —*PTI*

'Bring back Guru Granth saroops from Iran'

CHANDIGARH, 20 JUNE

The North American Punjabi Association has issued a pressing appeal to the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC) and wider Panthic leadership to protect the sacred copies of the Guru Granth Sahib housed at the Bhai Ganga Singh Sabha Gurdwara in Tehran, Iran, amid rising regional tensions. Satnam Singh Chahal, executive director of the association, called for the SGPC to organise a chartered aircraft and send a group of five dedicated Sikhs to safely escort the 'saroops' (physical copies of the Guru Granth Sahib) back to India with the utmost respect. SGPC president Harjinder Singh Dhami urged the Indian government to leverage its diplomatic relationships to safeguard these religious symbols. —*PTI*

EC warns against misuse of election video footage

NEW DELHI, 20 JUNE

The Election Commission (EC) has directed its state poll officers to destroy CCTV, webcasting, and video footage of election processes after 45 days if no legal challenge is filed within that period.

This instruction was sent in a letter to state chief electoral officers on 30 May.

Although recording elections through photography, videography, CCTV, and webcasting is not mandated by law, the EC uses such recordings as an internal management tool. However,

recent misuse of these recordings by non-contestants on social media, often taken out of context to spread misinformation, has caused concern.

To address this, the EC has mandated that all footage related to election processes be retained only for 45 days. If no election petition is filed challenging the poll results within this timeframe, recordings should be destroyed. An election petition can be filed in the relevant high court within 45 days of the election result.

This move seeks to balance the need for transparency with the risk of footage being used to create malicious narratives, ensuring that election data is preserved only as long as legally necessary. —*PTI*

'LEARN VALUE OF DEMOCRACY'

Textbooks to include Guv's powers: Kerala Min

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, 20 JUN

Kerala General Education Minister V Sivankutty on Friday announced that school textbooks will soon include content explaining the constitutional powers and duties of state Governors, saying schools are the ideal place to learn the values of democracy.

The announcement comes a day after Sivankutty made headlines for walking out of an official event at the Raj Bhavan, the Governor's residence, in protest against the display of a Bharat Mata image -- widely used in RSS events -- during the programme.

In a statement, the minister said the curriculum reforms are aimed at promoting constitutional principles, and schools play a vital role in helping children learn how democracy works.

n Thursday, Raj Bhavan had strongly criticised Sivankutty for walking out of the programme, organised to distribute "Scout and Guide Certificates" for school students, while Governor Rajendra Vishwanath Arlekar was present on the dais, calling it a "serious breach of protocol and a grave insult to the constitutional office of the Governor."

V Sivankutty PHOTO: ANI

Under attack from Raj Bhavan, the minister had hit back at the Governor, alleging that Arlekar had violated the Constitution by turning an official function at his residence into a political event.

Amid mounting criticism from the Left government, led by Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan, over the use of a saffron-clad image at official functions, the Governor has firmly stated: "There is no question of doing away with Bharat Mata, as we draw our idea of patriotism and nationhood from Bharat Mata." —*PTI*

CRUSHED BY KIDS' LOVE

President Droupadi Murmu has an emotional outburst as a group of visually impaired children sing a song to wish her on her 67th birthday during an event at the National Institute for the Empowerment of Persons with Visual Disabilities in Dehradun on Friday
PHOTO: PTI

Sun TV defends Kalanithi, says all obligations met

Dayanidhi sought to restore company' structure to pre-2003

NEW DELHI, 20 JUNE

A day after reports emerged of former Union minister Dayanidhi Maran accusing his brother of "fraudulent practices" and "misgovernance", the elder sibling Kalanithi-run Sun TV on Friday said the division between the promoter family done 22 years back was in compliance with all legal obligations.

Defending its promoter Kalanithi, Sun TV Network in a regulatory filing said the agreements between the two brothers had been "duly vetted" by "intermediaries" concerned before the company's public issue.

Dayanidhi sent a legal notice to his brother and others, accusing them of "fraudulent practices" and "misgovernance" in taking control of Sun TV after their father Murasoli Maran's death in 2003. The DMK MP, sought to restore the company's shareholding structure to its pre-September 2003 status.

Dayanidhi sent a legal notice to his brother and others, accusing them of 'fraudulent practices' and 'misgovernance' ***PHOTO: PTI***

Kalanithi with 75 per cent shareholding in Sun TV Network, leads its board as executive director and chairperson, with his daughter Kavya Kalanithi Maran being its member.

The rift between the Maran brothers did not have any bearing on the business of the company or its daily functioning.

Financial institutions own 10.46 per cent of the shareholding of Sun TV and 6.87 per cent by the foreign portfolio investors.

The Chennai-based network owns 37 television channels in seven languages and a direct-to-home platform. It operates 69 FM radio stations, three daily newspapers and six magazines.

Sun TV Network owns the Sunrisers Hyderabad franchise of the Indian Premier League and Sunrisers Eastern Cape of Cricket South Africa's T20 League.

For the 2024-25 financial year, the network's total consolidated income was Rs 4,712.60 crore, down 1.55 per cent. Its profit after tax was down 11.53 per cent to Rs 1,703.64 crore. *—PTI*

TEACHERS' PROTEST

HC bars monetary support to jobless

KOLKATTA, 20 JUNE

The Calcutta High Court on Friday restrained the West Bengal government from implementing a scheme till 26 September to provide monetary support to non-teaching staff who lost their jobs following a Supreme Court judgment that held the selection process tainted.

The court had reserved judgment on the petitions opposing the payment of Rs 25,000 each to Group C and Rs 20,000 each to Group D employees, who lost their jobs.

The court restrained the state government from giving any effect or further effect to the scheme till 26 September or until further order, whichever is earlier.

The state government was directed to file its affidavit opposing the contentions of the petitioners in four weeks and reply by the petitioners within a fortnight thereafter.

The West Bengal government introduced a scheme to provide "limited livelihood, support and social security on humanitarian ground" on temporary basis to distressed families of non-teaching staff, who had been recruited through the 2016 selection process conducted by the West Bengal School Service Commission.

Nearly, 26,000 teaching and non-teaching staff of West Bengal government-sponsored and -aided schools lost their jobs. The TMC reiterated its respect for the judiciary, but strongly criticised opposition parties for allegedly "denying humanitarian relief" to the non-teaching staff.

TMC spokesperson and senior leader, Kunal Ghosh alleged that certain political elements were "deriving monstrous glee" from the school employees' misfortune. *—PTI*

ONGC to cap leaking Assam oil well permanently

GUWAHATI, 20 JUNE

Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma announced that the Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) will permanently cap a crude oil well in Sivasagar district that has leaked gas for nine days. Two emergency measures were attempted by ONGC, but to no avail. Plan C will involve US experts arriving to assist in the capping process, expected to finish within four to five days. The well poses significant environmental risks, being close to a river embankment. Sarma reassured that compensation for affected residents is a priority and will be jointly assessed by ONGC and local authorities. The blowout occurred on 12 June at the well during operations by a private firm on behalf of ONGC. *—PTI*

HC seeks Kerala's stance on law on sorcery, black magic

PHOTO: FREEPIK

KOCHI, 20 JUNE

The Kerala High Court has sought the state government's stand regarding its earlier submission that it was contemplating legislation against evil practices like black magic and sorcery.

The Kerala government had filed a submission in October 2022 while hearing a plea by Kerala Yukthivadi Sangham, which had sought a law against such practices. The petition was dismissed in June 2023 due non representation, but was later restored.

When the matter came up for hearing before a division bench of Chief Justice Nitin Jamdar and Justice Basant Balaji on 3 June, the court directed the government to file an affidavit regarding the state's stand in respect of its earlier position that it was contemplating to enact a law on the subject.

The bench posted the matter for next hearing on 24 June.

The organisation said the Law Reforms Commission had submitted a comprehensive report to the State of Kerala in the year 2019, with legislative recommendations based on new social conditions. *—PTI*

Family defends accused in woman's death

KANNUR, 20 JUNE

The suicide of 40-year-old Raseena, a mother of three in Pinarayi village of Kerala who took the extreme step over a mob trial, has triggered a controversy, with police arresting three men based on clues from her suicide note, while her family is defending the arrested and instead, accused her male friend of financially exploiting her. Police said the suicide note suggested she faced public humiliation and distress caused by certain individuals, leading to the arrest of three. *—PTI*

The India Meteorological Department confirmed that the rainfall is likely to intensify on Friday
PHOTO: @BUBBLEBUSTER26/X

Mumbai gets record rain since 2023

MUMBAI/SHIMLA, 20 JUNE

Mumbai on Thursday recorded its highest 24-hour rainfall in June since 2023 and the second-highest in the last seven years, said the India Meteorological Department (IMD)

The weather department issued an orange alert for Mumbai, Thane, Raigad and Ratnagiri districts for on 20 June, while Palghar district has been placed under a red alert, indicating extremely heavy rainfall and possible disruption.

As rains lashed parts of Himachal Pradesh on Friday, triggering landslides at several places, the local Met office issued an orange alert for heavy to very heavy rains on 22, 23, 25 and 26 June.

In Himachal Pradesh, preparations are in full swing by the Una district administration to tackle potential disasters during the monsoon season, with more than 800 civil defence volunteers registered, said Deputy Commissioner Jatin Lal on Friday.

Rain also lashed parts of Punjab and Haryana on Friday bringing down the mercury by a few notches.

Report said that four children were killed in Kaushambi district of UP after being struck by lightning, police said on Friday. The first incident took place in Sarai Akil when four children were grazing goats. The second incident took place in Tara Ka Pura village when children had taken out buffaloes for grazing. *—PTI*

Sonam mislead cops, allege victim's kin

INDORE, 20 JUNE

Following the murder of Raja Raghuvanshi in Meghalaya during his honeymoon, his family demands a detailed investigation into his wife Sonam Raghuvanshi, who they believe has provided misleading information to authorities. Raja's brother, Sachin, insists on bringing Sonam and her alleged accomplice, Raj Kushwaha, to Indore for thorough questioning to uncover the truth. They also seek a narcoanalysis test for her and her family, suspecting conspiracy behind the murder. Raja disappeared on 23 May, with his body later found on 2 June. Sonam surrendered on 8 June, while Kushwaha and others were apprehended. A special investigation team is currently probing the case, following the court's extension of Sonam and Kushwaha's police custody. *—PTI*

CLASSROOM SCAM

ED seizes more than 300 passbooks in Delhi

NEW DELHI, 20 JUNE

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has seized over 300 passbooks associated with mule bank accounts linked to labourers, used to divert Delhi government funds stemming from a classroom construction scam during the previous AAP regime. The ED conducted searches at 37 locations in Delhi on 18 June.

The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) condemned the ED's actions as a "desperate" attempt to deflect public attention. It insisted that the allegations against its leaders were "politically motivated". This investigation followed an FIR filed by the Anti-Corruption Branch (ACB) on 30 April against AAP leaders, including former ministers Manish Sisodia and Satyendar Jain.

The ED uncovered incriminating evidence, including original government files and rubber stamps from the Public Works Department (PWD), along with findings of misappropriation exceeding Rs 2,000 crore in the construction of 12,748 classrooms. AAP has maintained that these actions are attempts to distract from the BJP's governance failures. *—PTI*

Heart attack kills Indian student in Canada

OTTAWA, 20 JUNE

Tanya Tyagi, an Indian student at the University of Calgary, tragically passed away on 17 June, 2025 in Canada due to a heart attack, according to lawyer Ishu Tyagi. Originally from Northeast Delhi, she resided at 559/11D, Lane No. 12, Vijay Park.

The Consulate General of India in Vancouver confirmed her death and expressed deep sorrow, stating, "We are saddened by the sudden demise of

Tanya Tyagi ***PHOTO: X***

Ms Tanya Tyagi, an Indian student at the University of Calgary. The Consulate is in touch with the authorities and will provide all required assistance to the bereaved family. Our heartfelt condolences and prayers are with her family and friends."

Tanya's family has appealed to Prime Minister Narendra Modi for urgent help in repatriating her body to India for final rites. The Consulate has assured ongoing support and coordination with local Canadian authorities to facilitate the process.

Her untimely death has deeply shocked her loved ones and the Indian student community. *—PTI*

PROHIBITORY ORDERS EXTENDED IN HIMACHAL DISTRICT

NAHAN, 20 JUNE

Authorities in Himachal Pradesh's Sirmaur district have extended prohibitory orders in five villages of the Paonta Sahib area until 26 June, amid fears of communal unrest following a clash over the elopement of a Hindu-Muslim couple.

The restrictions, in place since 13 June, apply to Kiratpur, Malion, Fatehpur, Missarwala and Majra villages under Majra police station. Issued under Section 163 of the Bhartiya Nagrik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS), 2023, the order bans public gatherings of five or more people, weapons, inflammable materials, rallies, and inflammatory speeches.

District Magistrate Priyanka Verma cited continued tension, stone-pelting, and provocative political speeches as reasons for the extension. *—PTI*

NINE KILLED IN ACCIDENT IN WB

WEST BENGAL, 20 JUNE

Nine people died in a head-on collision between a Bolero SUV and a truck on National Highway 18 near Namshol village, Purulia district, West Bengal, early Friday morning.

The victims, returning from a wedding, were travelling from Adabana village in Barabazar to Tilaitand in Nimdih, Jharkhand. The crash, which occurred around 6.30am under Balarampur police jurisdiction, left the SUV mangled.

Emergency responders rushed the injured to a nearby health centre, where all were pronounced dead. Preliminary investigations indicate overspeeding and possible negligence as causes. Police have registered a case and are continuing their inquiries. *—PTI*

Woman Naxalite killed in Chhattisgarh

KANKER, 20 JUNE

A woman Naxalite was killed in a clash with security forces in Chhattisgarh's Kanker district on Friday morning. She was killed during an anti-Naxal operation conducted by a joint team from the District Reserve Guard and the Border Security Force. The operation commenced between Amatola and Kalpar villages, following reports regarding the presence of members of the banned Maoist organisation across the Kotri river. The body of the deceased woman Naxalite, along with a weapon, were retrieved from the site of the encounter. As the situation remained dynamic, intermittent firing took place in the area and authorities continued their operations. Further details would be released as the situation developed. *—PTI*

PHOTOS: NASA

LAUNCH OPPORTUNITIES TILL MID-JULY

NASA puts off Axiom-4 mission for the 4th time

NEW DELHI, 20 JUNE

The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) has put off the 22 June launch of the Axiom-4 mission carrying Indian astronaut Shubhanshu Shukla and three others to the International Space Station (ISS), saying it required additional time to evaluate operations on the orbital lab after the recent repairs in its Russian section.

The Axiom-4 mission targeted a June 22 launch after being put off multiple times due to a leak in SpaceX's Falcon-9 rocket's boosters, inclement weather in the ascent trajectory and leaks in the aft-most section of Zvezda service module.

NASA needed additional time to continue evaluating the ISS operations after recent repair work in the aft (back) most segment of the orbital laboratory's Zvezda service module.

Because of the space station's interconnected and interdependent systems, it wanted to ensure the station is ready for additional crew members.

Former NASA astronaut and director of human spaceflight at Axiom Space, Peggy Whitson, will command the commercial mission, while Shukla will serve as the pilot. European Space Agency project astronaut Slawosz Uznanski-Wisniewski of Poland and Tibor Kapu of Hungary are the mission specialists.

The 14-day mission will "realise the return" to human spaceflight for India, Poland and Hungary.

SpaceX vice president William Gerstenmaier said that a liquid oxygen leak detected on the Falcon-9 booster during the re-entry phase of its previous mission was not fully repaired during refurbishment.

- NASA needed additional time to continue evaluating the ISS operations after recent repair work in the aft (back) most segment of the orbital laboratory's Zvezda service module

In case the mission is not launched within 30 June, there are opportunities from mid-July. The Axiom-4 crew has been in mandatory pre-launch quarantine since 26 May to ensure their health so that that they don't carry any infection to the closed environment of the orbiting lab. *—PTI*

SAY NO TO WAR

Shia Muslim cleric Maulana Kalbe Jawad and others protest against US President Donald Trump and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu over the ongoing Iran-Israel conflict, at the Bara Imambara, in Lucknow, on Friday ***PHOTO: PTI***

As the war escalates, Iran may need to rally its allies

As Israel continues its attacks on Iran, US President Donald Trump and other global leaders are hardening their stance against the Islamic Republic.

Trump has demanded "unconditional surrender" from Iran. Meanwhile, countries such as Germany, Canada, the UK and Australia have toughened their rhetoric, demanding Iran fully abandon its nuclear programme.

So, as the pressure mounts on Iran, has it been left to fight alone? Or does it have allies that could come to its aid?

Has Iran's "axis of resistance" fully collapsed?

Iran has long relied on a network of allied paramilitary groups across the Middle East as part of its deterrence strategy. This approach has largely shielded it from direct military strikes by the US or Israel, despite constant threats and pressure.

This so-called "axis of resistance" includes groups such as Hezbollah in Lebanon, the Popular Mobilisation Forces (PMF) in Iraq, the Houthi militants in Yemen, as well as Hamas in Gaza, which has long been under Iran's influence to varying degrees. Iran also supported Bashar al-Assad's regime in Syria before it was toppled last year.

These groups have served both as a regional buffer and as a means for Iran to project power without direct engagement.

However, over the past two years, Israel has dealt significant blows to the network.

Hezbollah — once Iran's most powerful non-state ally — has been effectively neutralised after months of attacks by Israel. Its weapons stocks were systematically targeted and destroyed across Lebanon. And the group suffered a major psychological and strategic loss with the assassination of its most influential leader, Hassan Nasrallah. In Syria, Iranian-backed militias have been largely expelled following the fall of Assad's regime, stripping Iran of another key foothold in the region.

Several regional powers maintain close ties with Iran. The most notable among them is Pakistan ***PHOTO: PTI***

That said, Iran maintains strong influence in Iraq and Yemen.

The PMF in Iraq, with an estimated 200,000 fighters, remains formidable. The Houthis have similarly sized contingent of fighters in Yemen.

Should the situation escalate into an existential threat to Iran — as the region's only Shiite-led state — religious solidarity could drive these groups to become actively involved. This would rapidly expand the war across the region.

The PMF, for instance, could launch attacks on the 2,500 US troops stationed in Iraq. Indeed, the head of Kata'ib Hezbollah, one of the PMF's more hardline factions, promised to do so:

If America dares to intervene in the war, we will directly target its interests and military bases spread across the region without hesitation.

Iran itself could also target US bases in the Persian Gulf countries with ballistic missiles, as well as close the Strait of Hormuz, through which about 20 per cent of the world's oil supply flows.

Several regional powers maintain close ties with Iran. The most notable among them is Pakistan — the only Islamic country with a nuclear arsenal.

In a sign of Pakistan's importance in the Israel-Iran war, Trump has met with the country's Army Chief in Washington as he weighs a possible strike on its neighbour.

Pakistan's leaders have also made their allegiances very clear. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has offered Iran's President "unwavering solidarity" in the "face of Israel's unprovoked aggression". And Pakistani Defence Minister Khawaja Asif recently said in an interview Israel will "think many times before taking on Pakistan".

These statements signal a firm stance without explicitly committing to intervention.

Yet, Pakistan has also been working to de-escalate tensions. It has urged other Muslim-majority nations and its strategic partner, China, to intervene diplomatically before the violence spirals into a broader regional war.

In recent years, Iran has also made diplomatic overtures to former regional rivals, such as Saudi Arabia and Egypt, in order to improve relations.

These shifts have helped rally broader regional support for Iran. Nearly two dozen Muslim-majority countries — including some that maintain diplomatic relations with Israel — have jointly condemned Israel's actions and urged de-escalation.

It's unlikely, though, that regional powers such as Saudi Arabia, Egypt, the United Arab Emirates and Turkey would support Iran materially, given their strong alliances with the US.

Iran's key global allies, Russia and China, have also condemned Israel's strikes. They have previously shielded Tehran from punitive resolutions at the UN Security Council. However, neither power appears willing — at least for now — to escalate the confrontation by providing direct military support to Iran or engaging in a standoff with Israel and the US.

Theoretically, this could

SALAR

Who is Khamenei, Iran's Supreme Leader?

Iran's Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who crushed internal threats repeatedly during more than three decades in power, now faces his greatest challenge yet.

His archenemy, Israel, has said it secured free rein over Iran's skies as it decimating the country's military leadership and nuclear programme. It is also threatened his life: Israeli Defence Minister Israel Katz said Khamenei "cannot continue to exist."

The 86-year-old leader faces a choice. He could escalate Iran's retaliation against Israel and risk even heavier damage from Israeli bombardment or he could seek a diplomatic solution that keeps the US out of the conflict, and risk having to give up the nuclear programme he has put at the centre of Iranian policy for years.

His history

When he rose to power in 1989, Khamenei had to overcome deep doubts about his authority as he succeeded the leader of the Islamic Revolution, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini. A low-level cleric at the time, Khamenei didn't have his predecessor's religious credentials. With his thick glasses and plodding style, he didn't have his fiery charisma either.

But Khamenei has ruled three times longer than the late Khomeini and has shaped Iran's Islamic Republic perhaps even more dramatically.

He entrenched the system of rule by the "mullahs," or Shiite Muslim clerics. That secured his place in the eyes of hardliners as the unquestionable authority — below only that of God. At the same time, Khamenei built the Paramilitary Revolutionary Guard into the dominant force in Iran's military and internal politics.

The Guard boasts Iran's most elite military and oversees its ballistic missile program. Its international arm, the Quds Force, pieced together the "Axis of Resistance," the collection of pro-Iranian proxies stretching from Yemen to Lebanon that for years gave Iran considerable power across the region. Khamenei also gave the Guard a free hand to build a network of businesses allowing it to dominate Iran's economy.

In return, the Guard became his loyal shock force.

Domestic challenges

The first major threat to Khamenei's grip was the reform movement that swept into a parliament majority and the presidency soon after he became supreme leader. The movement advocated for giving greater power to elected officials – something Khamenei's hardline supporters feared would lead to dismantling the Islamic Republic system.

Khamenei stymied the reformists by rallying the clerical establishment. Unelected bodies run by the mullahs succeeded in shutting down major reforms and barring reform candidates from running in elections.

The Revolutionary Guard and Iran's other security agencies crushed waves of protests that followed the failure of the reform movement. Huge nationwide protests erupted in 2009 over allegations of vote-rigging. Under the weight of sanctions, economic protests broke out in 2017 and 2019. More nationwide protests broke out in 2022 over the death of Mahsa Amini after police detained her for not wearing her mandatory headscarf properly.

Hundreds were killed in crackdowns on the protests, and hundreds more arrested amid reports of detainees tortured to death or raped in prison.

Still, the successive protests showed the strains in Iran's theocratic system and lay bare widespread resentment of clerical rule, corruption and economic troubles. Trying to defuse anger, authorities often eased enforcement of some of the Islamic Republic's social restrictions.

Moulding Iran into a regional power

When Khamenei took power, Iran was just emerging from its long war with Iraq that left the country battered and isolated.

Over the next three decades, Khamenei turned Iran around into as assertive power wielding influence across the Middle East. One major boost was the US's 2003 ouster of Saddam Hussein, which eventually brought Iranian-allied Shiite politicians and militias to power in Iraq.

Iraq provided a linchpin in Iran's Axis of Resistance, grouping Bashar Assad's Syria, Lebanon's Hezbollah, the Palestinian militant group Hamas and the Houthi rebels in Yemen. By 2015, the alliance was at its height, putting Iran on Israel's doorstep.

The past two years brought a dramatic reversal

Hamas' 7 Oct., 2023, attack on Israel brought a massive Israeli retaliation on the Gaza Strip. It also brought a turnaround in Israeli policy. After years of trying to fend off and tamp down Iran's allies, Israel made crushing them it's goal. Hamas has been crippled, though not eliminated, even at the cost of the decimation of Gaza.

Israel has similarly sidelined Hezbollah — at least for the moment — with weeks of bombardment in Lebanon last year, along with a dramatic attack with booby-trapped pagers and walkie-talkies that stunned the group.

An even heavier blow to Hezbollah was the fall in December of Syria's Bashar Assad when Sunni rebels marched on the capital and removed him from power. Now, a government hostile to Iran and Hezbollah rules from Damascus. *—PTI*

Iran's Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei ***PHOTO: PTI***

LETTERS write to us at salarenglishdigital@gmail.com

Israel and US have been targeting nuke scientists for decades

At least 14 nuclear scientists are believed to be among those killed in Israel's Operation Rising Lion, launched on 13 June, ostensibly to destroy or degrade Iran's nuclear programme and military capabilities.

Deliberately targeting scientists in this way aims to disrupt Iran's knowledge base and continuity in nuclear expertise. Among those assassinated were Mohammad Mehdi Tehranchi, a theoretical physicist and head of Iran's Islamic Azad University, and Fereydoun Abbasi-Davani, a nuclear engineer who led Iran's Atomic Energy Organisation.

Collectively, these experts in physics and engineering were potential successors to Mohsen Fakhrizadeh, widely regarded as the architect of the Iranian nuclear programme, who was assassinated in a November 2020 attack many blame on Israel.

However, this is not new: nuclear scientists have been targeted since the nuclear age began. Sources suggest nearly 100 instances of "scientist targeting" from 1944 through 2025.

The most recent assassination campaign against Iranian scientists is different from many of the earlier episodes in a few key ways. Israel's recent attack targeted multiple nuclear experts and took place simultaneously with military force to destroy Iran's nuclear facilities, air defences and energy infrastructure.

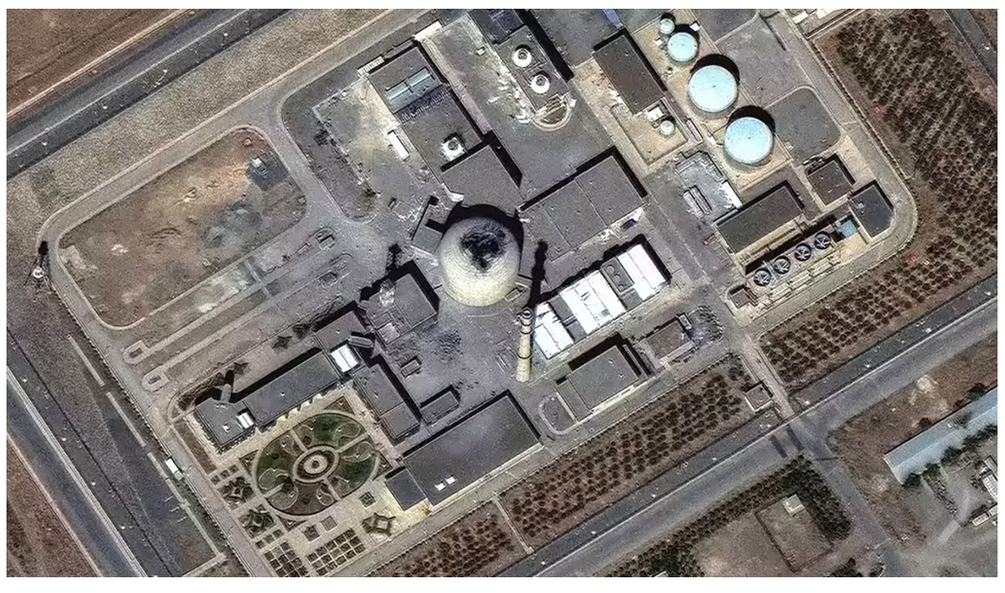
Also, unlike previous covert operations, Israel immediately claimed responsibility for the assassinations.

But research indicates that targeting scientists may not be effective for counter-proliferation. While removing individual expertise may delay nuclear acquisition, targeting alone is unlikely to destroy a programme outright and could even increase a country's desire for nuclear weapons. Further, targeting scientists may trigger blowback given concerns regarding legality and morality.

"Targeting" refers to cases in which scientists were captured, threatened, injured or killed as nations tried to prevent adversaries from acquiring weapons of mass destruction. Over time, at least four countries have targeted scientists working on nine national nuclear programmes.

The US and Israel have allegedly carried out the most attacks on nuclear scientists. But the UK and Soviet Union have also been behind such attacks.

Meanwhile, scientists working for the Egyptian, Iranian and Iraqi nuclear programmes



Iran's Arak nuclear facility suffered damage after being attacked by Israel ***PHOTO: PTI***

have been the most frequent targets since 1950. Since 2007 and prior to the current Israeli operation, 10 scientists involved in the Iranian nuclear program were killed in attacks.

Other countries' nationals have also been targeted: In 1980, Mossad, Israel's intelligence service, allegedly bombed Italian engineer Mario Fiorelli's home and his firm, SNIA Techint, as a warning to Europeans involved in the Iraqi nuclear project.

Given this history, the fact that Israel attacked Iran's nuclear programme is not itself surprising. Indeed, it has been a strategic goal of successive Israeli prime ministers to prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons, and experts had been warning of the increased likelihood of an Israeli military operation since mid-2024, due to regional dynamics and Iranian nuclear development.

In the months leading up to Israel's recent attack, Iran expanded its nuclear production capacity, moving beyond 60 per cent uranium enrichment, a technical step just short of weapons-grade material. During US President Donald Trump's first term, he withdrew the US from a multilateral nonproliferation agreement aimed at curbing Iran's nuclear programme.

After being reelected, Trump appeared to change tack by pursuing new diplomacy with Iran, but those talks have so far failed to deliver an agreement – and may be put on hold for the foreseeable future amid the war. Most recently, the International Atomic Energy Agency board of governors declared Iran in non-compliance with its nuclear-nonproliferation obligations. In response, Iran announced it was further expanding its enrichment capacity by adding advanced centrifuge technology and a third enrichment site.

Even if the international community anticipated the broader attack on Iran, characteristics of the targeting itself are surprising. Historically, states have covertly targeted individual scientists. But the recent multiple-scientist attack occurred openly, with Israel taking responsibility, publicly indicating the attacks' purpose.

Further, while it is not new for a country to use multiple counter-proliferation tools against an adversary over time, that Israel is using both preventive military force against infrastructure and targeting scientists at once is atypical.

Additionally, such attacks against scientists are historically lower tech and low cost, with death or injury stemming from gunmen, car bombs or accidents. In fact, Abbasi – who was killed in the most recent attacks – survived a 2010 car bombing in Tehran.

There are outliers, however, including the Fakhrizadeh assassination, which featured a remotely operated machine gun smuggled into Iranian territory.

Despite Israel's focus on scientists as sources of critical knowledge, there may be thousands more working inside Iran, calling into question the efficacy of targeting them. Further, there are legal, ethical and moral concerns over targeting scientists.

Moreover, it is a risky option that may fail to disrupt an enemy nuclear programme while sparking public outrage and calls for retaliation. This is especially the case if scientists, often regarded as civilians, are elevated as martyrs.

Regardless of whether targeting scientists is an effective counter-proliferation tool, it has been around since the start of the nuclear age – and will likely persist as part of the foreign policy toolkit for states aiming to prevent proliferation. *—PTI*

Israeli jets destroy Iran's research HQ

More than 60 planes pounded missile plants

Smoke rises from Soroka hospital complex in Beersheba, Israel, after it was hit by an Iranian missile Thursday
PHOTO: PTI

TEL AVIV, 20 JUNE

Israeli airstrikes reached into the Iranian city of Rasht on the Caspian Sea early Friday, Iranian media reported.

Israel also said it conducted airstrikes in Iran with more than 60 aircraft hitting what it said were industrial sites to manufacture missiles. It did not elaborate on the locations. It also said it hit the headquarters of Iran's Organisation of Defensive Innovation and Research, known by its acronym in Farsi, SPND.

In Israel, missiles struck a residential area in southern Israel causing damage to buildings, including one six-story building. At least five were injured.

Ahead of the strikes in Rasht, the Israeli military put out a warning urging the public to flee the area around Rasht's Industrial City, which sits a few kilometres southwest of the city's downtown. However, with Iran's internet being shut off to the outside world, it was unclear how many people in Iran would be able to see the message. Israel did not immediately describe what they sought to destroy in the ar-ea.

A week of Israeli strikes on Iran have killed at least 657 people and wounded 2,037 others, the Washington-based group Human Rights Activists said Friday.

The Israeli military said it has destroyed missile systems and radar installations around Isfahan. Iran has not offered any acknowledgment so far of its military losses in the war.

Meanwhile, French Foreign Minister Jean-Noël Barrot spoke by phone with US Secretary of State Marco Rubio on Thursday evening.

A French diplomatic official said Rubio "stressed the US was ready for direct contact with the Iranians at any time". —*PTI*

FOREIGN NATIONALS EVACUATED

Nations scrambled to evacuate their citizens from Israel and Iran. Due to shut-tered Middle Eastern airspace, commercial flights are disrupted, making evacuation arduous.

HERE ARE THE NUMBER OF FOREIGNERS ALREADY EVACUATED

Pakistan	3,000	European Union	400	Greece	105
Australia	2,700	Germany	345	Mexico	18
China	1,660	Bulgaria	237	South Korea	18
Japan	1,280	India	110		

Trump to decide on US role in 2 weeks

BEERSHEBA, 20 JUNE

President Donald Trump said on Thursday he will decide within two weeks whether the US military will get directly involved in the conflict between Israel and Iran given the "substantial chance" for renewed negotiations over Tehran's nuclear programme.

Trump has been weighing whether to attack Iran by striking its well-defended Fordo uranium enrich-ment facility, which is buried under a mountain and widely considered to be out of reach of all but America's "bunker-buster" bombs. His statement was read out by White House Press Secretary Ka-roline Leavitt.

"Based on the fact that there's a substantial chance of negotiations that may or may not take place with Iran in the near future, I will make my decision whether or not to go within the next two weeks," Leavitt quoted Trump as saying.

Earlier, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said "I can tell you that they're (the US) already helping a lot." —*Agencies*

Kremlin warns US

Washington would be making a serious mistake by launching an attack on Iran, Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov said. "Moscow believes it (US strike) is a wrong move. This is a step that is bound to lead to further escalation, a major escalation, and would only complicate the situation in the region," he said. "Such conflicts are capable of setting the entire region on fire."

Hezbollah vows to strike US

Iran-backed Shia militia Kataib Hezbollah has threatened to strike US military bases across West Asia if the United States joins the ongoing conflict between Iran and Israel, CNN reported. "We reaffirm, with even greater clarity, that should the US enter into this war, the deranged Trump shall forfeit all the trillions he dreams of seizing from this region," said Abu Ali al-Askari, the group's security leader.

Iran FM meets with EU counterparts

GENEVA, 20 JUNE

Iran's Foreign Minister plans to meet leading European counter-parts in Geneva, who hope to open a window for a diplo-matic solution.

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said his country has "nothing to discuss" with the United States as long as Israel continues its strikes on Iran, but is open to "dialogue" with others, though not negotiations.

In an interview aired Friday by Iranian state television, Araghchi said that "in the current situation, as the Zionist regime's attacks continue, we are not seeking negotiations with anyone." British Foreign Secretary David Lammy, who will meet Araghchi together with his French and German counterparts and the European Union's Foreign Policy Chief, said that "a window now exists within the next two weeks to achieve a diplomatic solution." —*PTI*

Firefighters evacuate a woman from a burning building after Russia's air attack in Odesa, Ukraine, on Friday
PHOTO: PTI

Russian drones strike Ukrainian cities, 1 dead

KYIV, 20 JUNE

Russian drone strikes targeted the southern port city of Odesa and the northeastern city of Kharkiv overnight, resulting in at least one death and numerous injuries among civilians, Ukrainian authorities reported. President Volodymyr Zelenskyy condemned the attacks on messaging app Telegram, labelling them "targeted terror" against Ukrainian civilians and called for increased economic pressure on Russia from the US and the European Union.

The barrage of over 20 drones injured nearly two dozen individuals, including two young girls aged 17 and 12. In Odesa, a fire sparked by the strikes engulfed a four-storey residential building, leading to its partial collapse and injuring three emergency workers. A fire also spread to the upper floors of a 23-storey high-rise, prompting the evacuation of around 600 residents. In Kharkiv, at least eight drones struck civilian infrastructure, injuring four, including two children.

Russia has intensified its summer offensive along the extensive front line, continuing its long-range strikes against civilian targets. A Kremlin spokesperson indicated that a date for the next round of peace talks could be set next week, although recent discussions between Kyiv and Moscow have not been forthcoming, with the last talks held in Istanbul on 2 June. Ukraine remains open to ceasefire dis-cussions while backing US-led diplomatic efforts. —*PTI*

Court lets Trump keep control of LA troops

LOS ANGELES, 20 JUNE

An appeals court on Thursday allowed US President Donald Trump to keep control of National Guard troops he deployed to Los Angeles following protests over immigration raids.

The decision halts a ruling from a lower court judge who found Trump acted illegally when he activated the soldiers over opposition from California Gov. Gavin Newsom. The deployment was the first by a President of a state National Guard without the Governor's permis-sion since 1965.

In its decision, a three-judge panel on the 9th US Circuit Court of Appeals unanimously concluded it was likely Trump lawfully exercised his authority in federalising control of the guard. It said that while Presi-dents don't have unfettered power to seize control of a state's guard, the Trump administration had presented enough evidence to show it had a defensible rationale for doing so.

"The undisputed facts demonstrate that before the deployment of the National Guard, protesters pinned down' several federal officers and threw concrete chunks, bottles of liquid, and other objects' at the officers. Protesters also damaged federal buildings and caused the closure of at least one feder-al building," the court wrote.

Trump celebrated the decision on his Truth Social platform, calling it a "BIG WIN".

Newsom expressed disappointment with the court's ruling but he said "The court rightly rejected Trump's claim that he can do whatever he wants with the National Guard and not have to explain him-self to a court." —*PTI*

The deployment was the first by a President of a state National Guard without the Governor's permis-sion since 1965
PHOTO: PTI

US trade talks to fix Canadian tariffs

TORONTO, 20 JUNE

Canada's Prime Minister Mark Carney on Thursday said he will impose new tariffs on US steel and alu-minium imports on 21 July, depending on the progress of trade talks with US President Donald Trump. Carney, who met with Trump at the Group of Seven (G7) meetings in Alberta this week, reiterated on Thursday that Canada and the US agreed to pursue negotiations toward a deal within 30 days. "Canada will be introducing a series of countermeasures to protect Canadian steel and aluminium workers and producers. First, Canada will adjust its existing counter-tariffs on US steel and aluminium products on 21 July to levels consistent with progress made in the broader trading agreement with the United States," Carney said. —*PTI*

UK House to vote on euthanasia for terminally ill

LONDON, 20 JUNE

British lawmakers are set to vote Friday on whether to back a bill to help terminally ill adults end their lives in England and Wales, in what could be one of the most consequential social policy decisions they will ever make.

Members of Parliament supported legalising assisted dying when they first debated the issue in No-vember by 330 votes to 275.

Since then, the Terminally Ill Adults (End of Life) Bill has undergone months of scrutiny leading to some changes in the proposed legislation, which is being shepherded through Parliament by Labour law-mak-er Kim Leadbeater rather than the government.

"We have the most robust piece of legislation in the world in front of us tomorrow, and I know that many colleagues have engaged very closely with the legislation and will make their decision based on those facts and that evidence, and that cannot be disputed," Leadbeater said on Thursday on the eve of the vote alongside bereaved and terminally ill people.

Proponents of the bill argue those with a terminal diagnosis must be given a choice at the end of their lives.

However, opponents say that the disabled and elderly could be at risk of being coerced to end their lives to save money. —*PTI*

Armed militants kill at least 34 soldiers in Niger

DAKAR, 20 JUNE

Armed assailants have killed 34 soldiers and injured 14 others in an attack in west-ern Niger, close to the bor-ders with Mali and Burkina Faso in Dakar, according to the country's defence minis-try. The assault occurred around 9am on Thursday in Banibangou, with the attackers reportedly using eight vehicles and over 200 motorbikes. The govern-ment stated that its forces retaliated, claiming to have eliminated numerous attackers it labelled as "ter-rorists." Ongoing search operations, both on land and from the air, are being conducted to locate any remaining assailants. Niger, along with Burkina Faso and Mali, has faced an esca-lating insurgency from jihadist groups linked to al-Qaida and the Islamic State for over a decade. —*PTI*

ADB, WB approve $1.5B loans for Bangladesh

DHAKA, 20 JUNE

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the World Bank have granted loans totalling USD 1.5 billion to Bangladesh, aimed at bank-ing sector reforms and cli-mate initiatives. The ADB approved a USD 900 mil-li-on loan, with USD 500 mil-lion earmarked for stabilis-ing and reforming Bangladesh's banking sys-tem, and an additional USD 400 million for the second phase of the Climate-Resilient Inclusive Development Programme. The World Bank is contrib-uting USD 640 million for projects enhancing gas sup-ply and im-proving air qual-ity. This financial support is expected to alleviate pres-sure on Bangladesh's for-eign cur-rency reserves, bolstering its economic sta-bility and climate resilience. —*PTI*

PHOTO: WIKIPEDIA

Chris Brown pleads not guilty to assault in London

LONDON, 20 JUNE

Grammy-winning artist Chris Brown has entered a not guilty plea at Southwark Crown Court regarding charges of beating and seri-ously injuring a music pro-ducer with a bottle in a London nightclub in Febru-ary 2023. The 36-year-old singer is accused of causing grievous bodily harm with intent to Abe Diaw, whom he allegedly assaulted unprovoked at the Tape nightclub in Mayfair. Alongside Brown, his friend and musician Omololu Akinlolu, 38, also pleaded not guilty to the same charge. According to prose-cu-tors, the attack was cap-tured on surveillance cam-eras, showing Brown hitting Diaw multiple times with a bottle before punching and kicking him. —*PTI*

Armenian PM to meet Erdogan in rare visit to Turkey

ISTANBUL, 20 JUNE

Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan is sched-uled to hold talks with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan on Friday as part of the two countries' efforts to normalise ties that were strained over his-tor-ic disputes and Turkiye's alliance with Azerbaijan. The talks between the two countries, which have no formal diplomatic ties, were expected to centre on the possible reopening of their joint border as well as the war between Israel and Iran. Turkey, a close ally of Azerbaijan, shut down its border with Arme-nia in 1993 in a show of solidarity with Baku, which was locked in a conflict with Armenia over the Na-gorno-Karabakh region. Turkey and Armenia also have a more than century-old dis-pute over the deaths of an estimated 1.5 million Armenians in massacres, deportations and forced marches that began in 1915 in Ottoman Turkey. —*PTI*

EMISSION WARNING

World will exhaust carbon budget in 3yrs: Study

NEW DELHI, 20 JUNE

If the world continues to release carbon dioxide at the current rate, the carbon budget for limiting global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius will be exhausted in just over three years, according to an international group of scientists.

The carbon budget refers to the total amount of carbon dioxide the planet can emit while still having a good chance of staying below a certain temperature threshold. In this case, the limit is 1.5 degrees Celsius, agreed upon at the Paris Climate Conference in 2015.

Exceeding the carbon budget does not mean the 1.5-degree limit will be crossed immediately. It means the world is on course to surpass it very soon unless emissions are drastically cut.

The latest 'Indicators of Global Climate Change' study, published in the journal Earth System Science Data, also found that the carbon budget for 2 degrees Celsius could be exceeded by 2048 if current levels of CO_2 emissions continue. Scientists said human activities have led to the release of around 53 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent (Gt CO_2e) into the atmosphere every year over the past decade.

In 10 years between 2015 to 2024, the Earth's temperature was 1.24 degrees Celsius higher than it was before the industrial era began. Scientists say 1.22 degrees Celsius of this warming was caused by hu-man activities.

2024 was the hottest year on record and marked the first calendar year with global average tempera-ture more than 1.5 degrees Celsius above the 1850–1900 baseline.

In 2022, the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) said the world must cut green-house gas emissions by 43 per cent by 2030, compared to 2019 levels, to keep the tempera-ture rise within 1.5 degrees Celsius since the Industrial Revolution. However, IPCC Chair Jim Skea told PTI in an interview in March that the target is now outdated due to a lack of action, meaning the actual reduc-tion needed is even higher. —*PTI*

The latest 'Indicators of Global Climate Change' study found that the car-bon budget for 2° C could be exceeded by 2048
PHOTO: FREEPIK

Post USAID cut, largest African refugee camp runs dry

KAKUMA, 20 JUNE

Martin Komol sighs as he inspects his cracked, mud-walled house that is one rain away from fully collapsing. Nothing seems to last for him and 300,000 other refugees in Africa's largest aid camp Kakuma camp in Kenya – now, not even food rations.

Funding for the UN World Food Programme has dropped after the Trump administration paused support in March, part of the widespread dismantling of foreign aid by the United States, once the world's biggest donor.

That means Komol, a widowed father of five from Uganda, has been living on handouts from neighbours since his latest monthly ration ran out two weeks ago. He said he survives on one meal a day, sometimes a meal every two days.

"When we can't find anyone to help us, we become sick, but when we go to the hospital, they say it's just hunger and tell us to go back home," the 59-year-old said. His wife is buried here. He is reluctant to return to Uganda, one of the more than 20 home countries of Kakuma's refugees.

Food rations have been halved. Previous ration cuts led to protests in March. Monthly cash transfers that refugees used to buy proteins and vegetables to supplement the rice, lentils and cooking oil distributed by WFP have ended this month. —*PTI*

PHOTO: FREEPIK

Rupee rises 14P to close at 86.59 against US dollar

MUMBAI, 20 JUNE

The rupee appreciated by 14 paise to close at 86.59 (provisional) against the US dollar on Friday aided by a fall in global crude oil prices and a weakening greenback. A strong show in the domestic equity markets, and FII inflows further supported the local unit, according to forex traders.

At the interbank foreign exchange, the rupee opened at 86.65 against the US dollar and traded in a narrow range of 86.55-86.67 before settling at 86.59 (provisional), up 14 paise. The rupee had lost 30 paise to close at an over two-month low of 86.73 against the dollar on Thursday. The dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading 0.30 per cent lower at 98.60. *—PTI*

Oswal Pumps shares rise over 3% on market debut

NEW DELHI, 20 JUNE

Oswal Pumps Ltd made a strong debut on Friday, listing at a premium of over 3 per cent against its issue price of Rs 614. Shares opened at Rs 632 on the BSE and Rs 634 on the NSE, later climbing to Rs 646.90.

The IPO, valued at Rs 1,387.34 crore, received an impressive 34.42 times subscription. It included a fresh issue worth Rs 890 crore and an offer-for-sale of Rs 497.34 crore by promoter Vivek Gupta. The proceeds will fund capital expenditure, investment in subsidiary Oswal Solar, new manufacturing units in Karnal (Haryana), debt repayment, and general corporate purposes. Established in 2003, Oswal Pumps began with low-speed monoblock pumps and has expanded into submersible pumps and electric motors, marking its growth in the water technology sector. *—PTI*

Delhivery starts on-demand intracity shipping

NEW DELHI, 20 JUNE

Logistics provider Delhivery on Friday announced the full-scale launch of On-demand Intracity Shipping service on the Delhivery Direct app in Delhi-NCR and Bengaluru after a pilot launch in Ahmedabad. In a statement, the company said the service offers pickups within 15 minutes of booking for local deliveries. Two-wheelers are used for parcel deliveries, while three- and four-wheeler vehicles cater to larger consignments. The Delhivery Direct App is available on Google Play and Apple App stores, where customers can download and book their intracity orders on demand, according to the statement. Delhivery MD & CEO Sahil Barua said this launch offers millions of consumers and SMEs across the country a logistics solution that is fast, affordable, and reliable. It completes the spectrum of offerings to the customers, who can now use the services for intracity needs as well, he added. *—PTI*

Growth in eight core sectors slows down to 0.7%

NEW DELHI, 20 JUNE

India's eight core sectors' growth slowed down to 0.7 per cent, lowest in nine months, in May 2025 against 6.9 per cent in the same month last year, according to the latest government data released on Friday. The previous low pace was recorded in August 2024 when the output had contracted by -1.5 per cent. In April this year, the growth in output of these key infrastructure sectors were recorded at 1 per cent. The output of four key sectors -- crude oil, natural gas, fertiliser and electricity -- recorded a negative growth in May. However, refinery products and cement output recorded a positive growth. *—PTI*

Markets gain momentum, break three-day stall

Sensex surges by 1,046.30 pts; Nifty climbs by 319.15 pts

MUMBAI, 20 JUNE

PHOTO: FREEPIK

- A largely supportive trend overseas and renewed foreign capital inflows supported the domestic equities amid easing tension in the Middle East, traders said

Equity benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty rebounded sharply by over 1 per cent on Friday after sliding for the past three sessions, propelled by bargain hunting in financial, telecom and tech stocks amid a correction in global crude prices.

A largely supportive trend overseas and renewed foreign capital inflows supported the domestic equities amid easing tension in the Middle East, traders said.

After a flat start, the 30-share BSE Sensex later found its mojo back and surged 1,046.30 points or 1.29 per cent to settle at 82,408.17. During the day, it jumped 1,132.62 points or 1.39 per cent to 82,494.49.

The 50-share NSE Nifty climbed 319.15 points or 1.29 per cent to 25,112.40.

"Equity indices surged as Middle East tension moderated with risk of immediate military actions reduced as US dialogue with Iran is expected to take place. The development led the crude price to correct, favouring domestic markets and boosting foreign investors' sentiments.

"In the broader market, rapid fall in VIX index and buying was witnessed in rate sensitives and consumer-oriented sectors like Finance, Auto and Reality and in anticipation of better Q1FY26 results led by rate cuts benefits, drop in inflationary pressure and rebound in consumer spending," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Investments Limited, said.

From the Sensex firms, Bharti Airtel, Nestle, Mahindra & Mahindra, Power Grid, Reliance Industries, NTPC, Eternal and HDFC Bank were among the biggest gainers.

In contrast, Axis Bank and Maruti were the laggards.

Global oil benchmark Brent crude dropped 1.93 per cent to USD 77.33 a barrel.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) bought equities worth Rs 934.62 crore on Thursday, according to exchange data. Domestic Institutional Investors (DIIs) also bought equities worth Rs 605.97 crore.

On Thursday, the 30-share BSE Sensex declined 82.79 points, or 0.10 per cent, to settle at 81,361.87. The Nifty dipped 18.80 points or 0.08 per cent to 24,793.25. *— PTI*

BASMATI FEELS THE HEAT

Middle East crises hit India in many sectors, says Crisil

NEW DELHI, 20 JUNE

The Indian Basmati rice sector is poised to feel the effects of ongoing uncertainties in the Middle East, as outlined in a recent report by Crisil Ratings. While other sectors, such as fertilisers and diamonds – both cut and polished – may also be affected, the impact on Basmati rice is expected to be more pronounced.

The report highlights that Iran and Israel represent around 14 per cent of Indian Basmati rice exports for FY 2025. Although the sector is expected to experience limited immediate disruptions due to current regional tensions, a prolonged crisis could hinder payment processes from business partners in these countries, thereby extending the working capital cycle.

In the diamond sector, Israel accounted for nearly 4 per cent of total diamond exports last year, making it a critical trading hub. During periods of conflict, domestic polishers can pivot to alternative trading centres such as Belgium and the United Arab Emirates, thus mitigating any negative effects, with the final buyers located in the US and Europe.

On the global oil front, ongoing uncertainties have influenced crude oil markets, with Brent crude fluctuating between USD 73-76 per barrel in the past week, up from an average of USD 65 per barrel during April-May 2025. Furthermore, rising tensions are likely to drive up air and sea freight costs, as well as insurance premiums, impacting export and import-driven sectors across the board. *— ANI*

Govt imposes import curbs on precious metal alloys

NEW DELHI, 20 JUNE

The Ministry of Commerce and Industry has announced new restrictions on imports of certain precious metal alloys containing gold, alongside colloidal metals and chemical compounds. The aim is to enhance regulatory oversight and curb potential misuses of trade channels for gold imports.

In a statement, the ministry revealed that it issued Notification No. 18/2025-26 on 17 June, 2025, restricting the import of alloys of Palladium, Rhodium, and Iridium containing more than 1 percent gold by weight. This update expands existing regulations that previously focused solely on platinum.

The government has categorised the entire Customs Tariff Heading (CTH) 7110 under restricted imports, ensuring a consistent policy for precious metals and their alloys. However, alloys containing less than 1 percent gold will remain freely importable, protecting industrial sectors like electronics and automotive from disruptions.

Additionally, the DGFT issued Notification No. 19/2025-26 to restrict imports of colloidal metals and chemical compounds, with provisions for essential industries, reflecting a careful balance between trade facilitation and regulatory compliance. *—ANI*

Gold declines ₹600 to settle down at ₹99,960 per 10g

NEW DELHI, 20 JUNE

Gold prices slipped below the Rs 1 lakh-mark, falling Rs 600 to Rs 99,960 per 10g in the national capital due to selling by jewellers and stockists in line with weak global cues, according to the All India Sarafa Association.

Gold of 99.9 per cent purity had settled at Rs 1,00,560 per 10g in the previous market session.

Gold of 99.5 per cent purity dipped Rs 550 to Rs 99,250 per 10g (inclusive of all taxes). Gold had closed at Rs 99,800 per 10g on Thursday.

On the global market, spot gold was trading at USD 3,353.67, lower by USD 16.72 per ounce, or 0.5 per cent. *—PTI*

Ola's Krutrim acquires BharatSah'AI'yak

NEW DELHI, 20 JUNE

Ola Group's artificial (AI) intelligence arm Krutrim on Friday announced the acquisition of AI platform BharatSah'AI'yak from technology consultancy firm Samagra for an undisclosed amount.

As part of the deal, Krutrim has also onboarded Samagra's core AI team.

The AI-enabled chatbot KumbhSah'AI'yak was developed for Maha Kumbh 2025 to offer pilgrims round-the-clock guidance on rituals, navigation, accommodations, and attractions.

"Integrating Bharat Sah'Ai'yak into the Krutrim ecosystem widens its offerings. This integration enhances our ability to build AI that is inclusive, intuitive, and deeply rooted in the lived realities of India," Krutrim spokesperson said in a statement.

Krutim had hosted open-source LLM services for the chatbot. *– PTI*

India to measure impact of Middle East conflict

NEW DELHI, 20 JUNE

The commerce ministry on Friday will meet stakeholders, including shipping lines, exporters, container firms, and other departments, to assess the impact of the Middle Easet (ME) conflict on India's overseas trade and address related issues, an official said.

The industry official said that the meeting will be chaired by Commerce Secretary Sunil Barthwal. "The meeting is today (Friday). We will raise issues related to freight rates," the official said.

Barthwal has earlier stated that India is keeping a close watch on the situation.

Exporters have stated that the war, if escalated further, would impact world trade and push both air and sea freight rates.

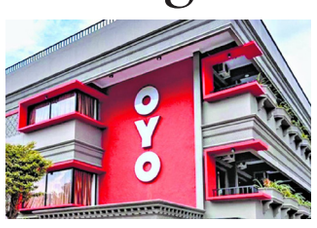
They have expressed apprehensions that the conflict may impact the movement of merchant ships from the Strait of Hormuz and the Red Sea.

Nearly two-thirds of India's crude oil and half of its LNG imports pass through the Strait of Hormuz, which Iran has now threatened to close.

This narrow waterway, only 21 miles wide at its narrowest point, handles nearly a fifth of global oil trade and is indispensable to India, which depends on imports for 80 per cent of its energy needs. *— PTI*

Innov8 sells 3% stake to expand co-working biz

NEW DELHI, 20 JUNE



OYO-owned co-working firm Innov8 has sold 3 per cent stake in the company to investors at a valuation of Rs 1,000 crore to expand its business amid rising demand of flexible workspace, according to sources.

Raymond Family Office has emerged as the lead investor, acquiring nearly 2 per cent share, they added.

In January this year, Innov8 had raised Rs 110 crore from investors, diluting 10 per cent of its equity to a clutch of high-profile investors including family offices of Gauri Khan, Mankind Pharma, Rupa Group, and Jagruti Dalmia.

Founded in 2015 by Ritesh Malik, Innov8 has more than 30 centres across 10 cities – Delhi, Gurugram, Noida, Mumbai, Pune, Chennai, Bengaluru, Ahmedabad, Hyderabad, and Indore.

Innov8 has seen over 90 occupancies in its centres, driven by rising demand for flexible office spaces. It plans to reach 100 centres by end of this year.

The demand for managed flexible workspaces has risen post-COVID pandemic. Corporates of all sizes are preferring to set up offices in co-working centres to save on capital expenditure, besides having flexibility. *— PTI*

Domestic air travel to grow by 10% in FY2026: ICRA

NEW DELHI, 20 JUNE

- The aviation industry is expected to post a net loss of up to Rs 30,000 crore in FY2026, mirroring its losses in FY2025

The Indian aviation sector is set to continue its growth trajectory, with domestic air passenger traffic projected to rise by 7–10 per cent year-on-year (YoY) in FY2026, reaching 175–181 million passengers, according to credit rating agency ICRA. This follows a 7.6 per cent increase in FY2025, when 165.4 million domestic passengers were recorded—16.8 per cent higher than pre-Covid levels in FY2020.

Despite this growth, the industry is expected to post a net loss of Rs 20,000–Rs 30,000 crore in FY2026, mirroring losses in FY2025 and sharply contrasting with the Rs 1,600 crore net profit in FY2024. ICRA attributes the ongoing losses to rising operating costs, elevated jet fuel prices, and increasing lease liabilities tied to new aircraft deliveries.

The interest coverage ratio is forecast between 1.5 and 2.0 times in FY2026, suggesting slight improvement in financial stability. International travel is also expected to expand, with a projected 15–20 per cent YoY growth. In FY2025, Indian carriers flew 33.86 million international passengers, 49 per cent above pre-pandemic levels. While air traffic continues to recover, ICRA warns that high fixed costs and cost pressures will delay a full financial turnaround. *—ANI*

Axiscades, MBDA to set up defence unit in Bengaluru

NEW DELHI, 20 JUNE

Homegrown Axiscades on Friday said it has signed an agreement with European missile systems major MBDA to set up a defence facility in Karnataka. The pact has been inked through its wholly owned subsidiary Axiscades Aerospace and Technologies to set up the unit at the Aerospace Park near Kempegowda International Airport, Bengaluru, Axiscades Technologies) said.

"The facility will be equipped with test bench laboratories, infrastructure for missile launchers, specialized equipment, and trained technical personnel to support MBDA's advanced systems engineering requirements," it said. *— PTI*

4TH LARGEST ECONOMY

WEF lauds India's role in energy transition

NEW DELHI, 20 JUNE

PHOTO: FREEPIK

- The real measure of the world's shift to clean and sustainable energy lies in the hands of – the United States, China, the European Union, Japan and India

Ranked 4th among the world's five largest economies, India holds a critical position in shaping the global energy transition, not only due to its rapid economic growth but also because of its rising energy demand and increasing influence on global emissions and energy policy, according to a report by the World Economic Forum (WEF).

The real measure of the world's shift to clean and sustainable energy lies in the hands of – the United States, China, the European Union, Japan and India.

These five economies together make up about half of the world's population, GDP, and energy use. More significantly, they are responsible for nearly two-thirds of global emissions, giving them a major role in how quickly and effectively the planet can shift to cleaner energy.

Over the past ten years, all five of these economic giants have made progress. India and China showed the most improvement, especially in expanding access to energy and preparing their systems for the future.

In India, strong steps were taken to ensure more people have access to electricity and clean fuels, along with better energy laws and increased investments in solar, wind, and other renewable sources.

India still faces challenges. The WEF report highlights the need to improve electricity supply in rural areas, reduce dependence on imported energy, and strengthen grid reliability.

While 77 of 118 countries improved their energy transition scores in 2025, only 28 per cent showed balanced progress across all key areas.

India stands out as one of the few emerging economies, making strides on multiple fronts. *—ANI*

IPO-bound Kalpataru sells properties worth ₹2,727 cr

NEW DELHI, 20 JUNE

Real estate developer Kalpataru Ltd will launch its Rs 1,590-crore initial public offering (IPO) from 24 to 26 June, with anchor investor bidding opening on 23 June. The price band has been set at Rs 387 to Rs 414 per share, valuing the company at around Rs 8,500 crore at the upper end.

The IPO is a pure fresh issue, with proceeds earmarked for debt repayment and general corporate purposes.

Mumbai-based Kalpataru reported property sales worth Rs 2,727.24 crore between April and December 2024, with total sales of Rs 3,201.98 crore for the full financial year. The firm develops residential, commercial, retail, and integrated township projects, and also undertakes society redevelopment.

Managing Director Parag M Munot expressed confidence in the IPO's success, citing sustained real estate demand and India's robust growth outlook. Kalpataru has delivered 75 projects covering 16 million sq ft and holds a development portfolio of nearly 50 million sq ft.

Founded in 1969 by Mofatraj P Munot, the Kalpataru Group also operates in EPC contracting, logistics, and infrastructure, with Kalpataru Projects International Ltd listed on Indian stock exchanges. *—PTI*

PHOTO: X

Sinner featured on Andrea Bocelli's new single

ROME, 20 JUNE

Top-ranked tennis player Jannik Sinner is featured on Andrea Bocelli's new single, 'Dust and Glory,' which was released Friday. The song, which blends Italian and English, mixes Bocelli's vocals with spoken verses from Sinner. It's a tribute to the struggle and beauty of life's journey, and "the fine line that turns dust into glory." There's also an accompanying four-minute music video featuring private footage from the childhoods of both Italian stars, with current scenes filmed at Bocelli's home in Tuscany. "Talent doesn't exist; it has to be earned," Sinner says in the recording. "Sharing this journey with Jannik was fascinating," Bocelli said. "We're from different worlds but close in commitment and discipline in the constant search for authenticity and beauty. I have always been his fan, fascinated not only by his talent, but also by his humility and his inner strength."—*PTI*

Australia drops Labuschagne post WTC final

BRIDGETOWN, 20 JUNE

Marnus Labuschagne has been dropped, and injured Steve Smith has been ruled out of the Australia lineup for next week's series-opening cricket Test against the West Indies. Cricket Australia on Friday said Smith would miss the opening match of the three-Test series because of a finger injury sustained in the World Test Championship final loss to South Africa last weekend at Lord's. He is expected to be fit for the second Test against the West Indies. Chief selector George Bailey said teenage opener Sam Konstas and wicketkeeper-batter Josh Inglis would replace Smith and Marnus Labuschagne. —*PTI*

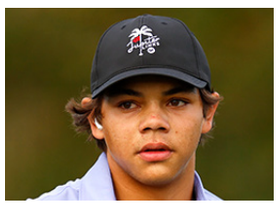


PHOTO: X

Tiger Woods' son qualifies for US Jr Amateur C'ship

DUBAI, 20 JUNE

Charlie Woods, son of golf legend Tiger Woods, on Thursday qualified for the US Junior Amateur Championship for the second consecutive year. Competing in a qualifier at Eagle Trace Golf Club in Coral Springs, Florida, Charlie secured his place in the prestigious event through a 3-for-1 playoff win. Next up for the 16-year-old is the tournament's 36-hole strokeplay qualifier, where 264 players will compete for one of 64 spots in the matchplay bracket. Charlie, who bogeyed his final hole, dropping into a three-way playoff for the final qualifying spot, held his nerve and won the playoff.—*PTI*

South Korea lifts 26-year ban on foreign goalkeepers

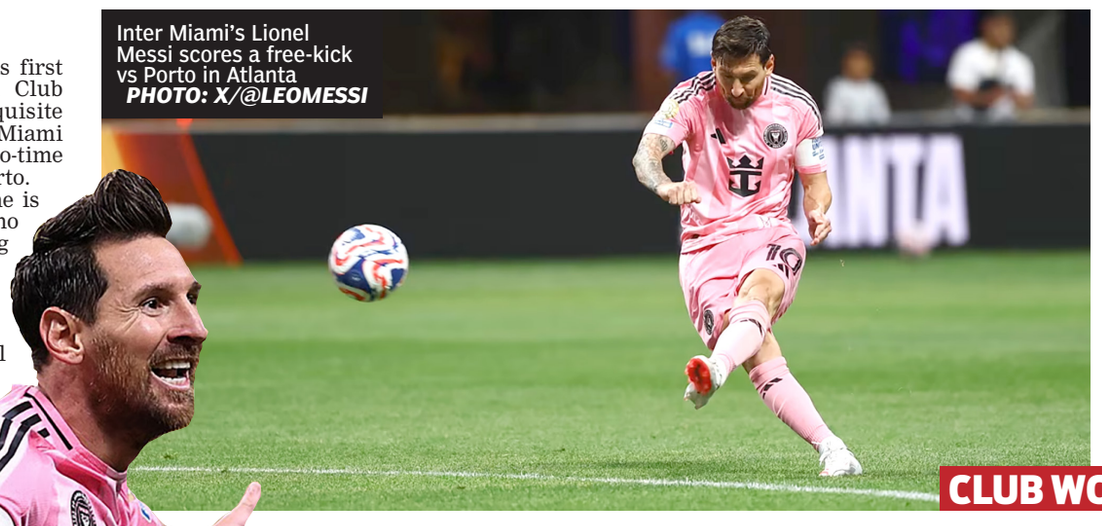
SEOUL, 20 JUNE

A 26-year ban on foreign goalkeepers in South Korea's top soccer league has been lifted for the start of the 2026 season. Only Korean goalkeepers have been allowed to play in the K League, the oldest professional domestic league in Asia, since 1999. The rule was introduced in a bid to protect homegrown talent when there were only 10 professional clubs. The K League announced after a board meeting in Seoul this week that, because there are now 26 professional clubs in the top two tiers of competition, there's enough room for international goalkeepers.—*PTI*

Messi scores on free kick to give Inter 2-1 win

Messi insists he is not friends with Cristiano Ronaldo

ATLANTA, 20 JUNE



Inter Miami's Lionel Messi scores a free-kick vs Porto in Atlanta
PHOTO: X/@LEOMESSI

Lionel Messi scored his first goal of the expanded Club World Cup on an exquisite free kick, lifting Inter Miami to a 2-1 victory over two-time European champion Porto.

Lionel Messi insists he is not friends with Cristiano Ronaldo despite having "a lot of respect" for the Portugal legend.

Messi and Ronaldo went head-to-head at the top of world football for over a decade, with the pair winning all but two of the Ballon d'Or trophies awarded between 2008 and 2023. The Herons trailed 1-0 at the break, but Telasco Segovia tied it two minutes into the second half off a cross into the box from Marcelo Weigandt. Then it was time for the 37-year-old Argentinian to add a trademark goal to a resume that already assures he'll go down as one of the game's greatest stars. Both teams were held to scoreless draws in their opening Group A matches.

Messi was taken down just outside the penalty area by Rodrigo Mora on a run down the middle of the field. The crowd at Mercedes-Benz Stadium was chanting "Messi!" Messi! Messi!" before his left-footed blast cleared the Porto wall and ripped the net in the top right corner in the 54th minute.

Inter Miami returns to South Florida on Monday, knowing a victory over Brazilian club Palmeiras at Hard Rock Stadium will lock up its spot in the Round of 16.

In desperate need of a win, Porto closes out group play against Egypt's Al Ahly at MetLife Stadium in East Rutherford, New Jersey.—*PTI*

Botafogo stuns Champions League winner PSG 1-0

PASADENA, 20 JUNE

Botafogo stunned Champions League winner Paris Saint-Germain 1-0 in each club's second match of the Club World Cup.

Igor Jesus scored late in the first half on Thursday night, and the South American champions made it stand up through a tense second half while moving atop the group at 2-0-0. PSG hadn't lost in any competition since May 3, but the European champions looked understandably weary at times before a lively Rose Bowl crowd of 53,699.

Jesus' stunning score in the 36th minute was the first goal allowed since May 17 by PSG, which routed Atlético Madrid 4-0 last Sunday in Pasadena.

The French powerhouse had outscored its last three opponents by a combined 12-0, winning the French Cup and the Champions League final along the way. Ballon d'Or contender Ousmane Dembélé missed his second straight game for PSG with a quadriceps injury. His teammates still dominated possession in the first half, even though coach Luis Enrique rotated his starting lineup. —*PTI*

CLUB WORLD CUP

DISAPPOINTING START BY ADITI

FRISCO, 20 JUNE

Indian golfer Aditi Ashok endured another rough start at a Major as she began the KPMG Women's PGA Championship at Fields Ranch East with a disappointing 9-over 81 that had no birdies.

Almost sure to miss the cut unless she shoots a very low second round, she was lying tied 135th and the projected cut is around 3-over. Aditi had six bogeys and one triple bogey. World No. 2 Jeeno Thitikul overcame an early double bogey to shoot 4-under 68. The 22-year-old Thai golfer made four pars on the first four holes of round one in Frisco, Texas, before she had a frustrating double bogey on the par-4 5th hole to drop to 2-over. The five-time LPGA Tour winner steadied herself with a par on six before rattling off three consecutive birdies on the seventh, eighth, and ninth holes to get back to 1-under for the day and turn in 36.

Thitikul then picked up a pair of back-to-back birdies on holes 11 and 12 and landed one last birdie on the par-3 17th hole. —*PTI*

TENDULKAR-ANDERSON TROPHY

Jaiswal brings up a 5th Test century, his first on English soil in 1st Test

LEEDS, 20 JUNE

Yashasvi Jaiswal scored a scintillating century against England in the first Test at Headingley. The youngster has proved his worth, playing to merit and hit his fifth Test ton of his career. With that, Jaiswal became the third youngest Indian cricketer to have scored a century in Australia and England. In the last Border-Gavaskar Trophy, Jaiswal played a terrific knock of 161 runs in Perth. Now, at Headingley, he measured his innings well and built crucial partnerships with KL Rahul and Shubman Gill to reach the three-figure mark.

Notably, Sachin was only 19 years old when he completed a century in Australia and England. He scored an unbeaten 119 in Manchester in 1990, and two years later, Sachin scored his first century against Australia in Sydney. When it comes to Pant, the keeper-batter scored a century at The Oval in 2018, followed by 159* against Australia in Sydney in 2019. Pant was only 21 at that time. This is Jaiswal's first-ever trip to the UK, and he has started the high-profile series with a bang. —*PTI*

Bangladesh in pole position against SL

GALLE, 20 JUNE

Bangladesh held the upper hand at the end of Day 4 of the series-opening cricket test against Sri Lanka, reaching 177-3 in their second innings to lead by 187 runs on Friday.

With seven wickets in the hutch and the pitch beginning to show signs of wear and tear, the tourists will fancy their chances of pulling off a rare test victory overseas and pocketing some precious World Test Championship points in the process. Having eked out a slender first-innings lead of 10 runs, Bangladesh batted with the sort of positive intent that suggests they were not content to merely survive.

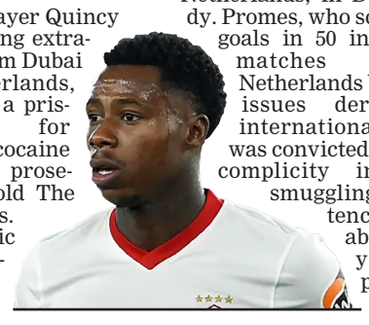
Shadman Islam set the tone, first putting on 24 for the opening wicket with Anamul Haque and then 36 more with Mominul Haque. But it was his third-wicket partnership a sturdy 68-run stand with captain Najmul Hossain Shanto that truly swung momentum Bangladesh's way.

Shadman's knock of 76 was fashioned with composure and clarity, the left-hander repelling spin and pace alike with soft hands and a watchful eye. Bangladesh 495 and 177 for 3 (Shanto 56, Mushfiqur 22*, Shadman 76, Jayasuriya 1-48) lead Sri Lanka 485 (Nissanka 187, Kamindu 87, Nayeem 5-121, Mahmud 3-74) by 187 runs. —*PTI*

Promes extradited over cocaine smuggling case

THE HAGUE, 20 JUNE

Dutch soccer player Quincy Promes was being extradited Friday from Dubai to the Netherlands, where he faces a prison sentence for involvement in cocaine smuggling, the prosecutor's office told The Associated Press. The Dutch public prosecution service confirmed to the AP that Promes was en route to the Netherlands, in Dutch custody. Promes, who scored seven goals in 50 international matches for the Netherlands before legal issues derailed his international career, was convicted last year of complicity in cocaine smuggling and sentenced in his absence to six years in prison. —*PTI*



Indian archers lose 5 finals, return with nine medals

SINGAPORE, 20 JUNE

India's junior archers returned with nine medals two gold, six silver, and one bronze again highlighted a troubling trend that has come to define Indian archery at all levels, faltering when it matters the most.

Despite making seven of the 10 finals across recurve and compound disciplines, Indian archers finished on top of the podium just twice.

The rest of the finals five in all ended in heartbreak, with the Indians visibly crumbling under pressure. It wasn't so much that the losses stood out, but the manner in which the Indian archers lost was more concerning with top seeds going down to lower-ranked opponents, arrows straying to outer rings, and composure evaporating at the slightest of resistance. —*PTI*

Kumar pulls off upset win over Georgian GM Tornidze

MUMBAI, 20 JUNE

Candidate Master Madhesh Kumar toppled experienced Georgian GM Sanikidze Tornidze, pulling offan upset win in the fourth round of the Aurionpro International Grandmaster andJunior Chess Tournament here on Friday. In other results, GM Manuel Petrosyan clinically beat Alexei Fedorov, while GM Aleksej Aleksandrov held top seedLevan Pantsulaia to a draw.Young Advik Amit Agrawal impressed byholding IM Alexander Slizhevsky to a draw under pressure.

After four rounds, eight players are ona perfect 4/4, heightening the race for the title.Madhesh also continued his dream run inthe junior event, winning again to remain on 4/4 and lead the sub-juniorstandings. —*PTI*

ISRL sees record-breaking rider registrations for season 2

PUNE, 20 JUNE

A record-breaking 155 riders including six-time German Supercross champion Greg Aranda have registered for the mega auction for the second edition of the Indian Supercross Racing League, organisers announced on Friday.

With riders hailing from 21 countries and from across 6 continents, the 2025 roster of the ISRL showcases a powerful blend of world champions, rising stars, and homegrown Indian talent.

Joining the league for the first time are globally renowned supercross athletes including Aranda, French SX1 vice champion Anthony Bourdon, French MX & SX champion Maxime Desprey and Justin Starling, an AMA SX veteran with 106 main events. They will race alongside returning international stars including season one 450cc champion Australian Matt Moss MXON world champion Jordi Tixier of France and five time Italian SX/MX champion Lorenzo Camporese.

From India, top performers like Ikshan Shanbhag and Rugved Barguje, who stood out in season 1, reaffirm ISRL's commitment to nurturing Indian racing talent.

Supercross in India is clearly on a sharp growth trajectory, and this year's volume and quality of rider registrations reflect that momentum. —*PTI*

ISRL season 2 sees 50% jump with 155 Global riders PHOTO: PTI

HIGH POSITIVITY RATE

India topped doping charts in 2023

NEW DELHI, 20 JUNE

India's doping woes came to the fore once again with the country topping the-World Anti-Doping Agency's 2023 testing figures among countries that analysed5,000 or more samples, even as the sports ministry promised an "aggressiveclean-up" and an amended Anti-Doping Act after addressing objections fromthe WADA. India's positivity rate forbanned substances stood at 3.8 per cent 214 Adverse Analytical Findings(AAF) from 5606 samples.

The sample size was significantly higher from 2022when 3865 tests returned an AAF rate of 3.2 per cent.

Of the 5606 tests, 2748 wereconducted in-competition. India's positivity rate for banned substances wassignificantly higher than China (28,197 samples, 0.2 per cent AAF rate), USA(6798 samples, 1.0 per cent AAF rate), France (11,368 samples, 0.9 per cent AAFrate), Germany (15,153 samples, 0.4 per cent AAF rate) and Russia (10,395samples, 1.0 per cent AAF rate).

As compared to India's 214,France, Russia, USA, China and Germany recorded 105, 99, 66, 60 and 57 AAFsrespectively."Any amount of doping isunacceptable, but we have to acknowledge that our testing is vigorous, and withevery year, the sample size is increasing.

With our aggressive awarenesscampaigns, we intend to bring the numbers down in the next two years," asports ministry source said when approached for a comment on the latest report. —*PTI*

Mohamed Salah nominated for Player of the Year

NEW DELHI, 30 OCT

Liverpool forward Mohamed Salah, who played a vital role in Liverpool's Premier League title win, was among six players nominated for the Professional Footballers' Association Men's Player of the Year award on Friday.

The Egyptian was instrumental in the Reds' Premier League title success last season, scoring 29 goals and adding 18 assists.

Earlier this year, he was voted footballer of the year by the Football Writers' Association, and will now be favourite to win the vote of his peers.

He is joined on the shortlist by team-mate Alexis Mac Allister, Arsenal's Declan Rice, Cole Palmer of Chelsea, Newcastle striker Alexander Isak, and Manchester United midfielder Bruno Fernandes.

Mac Allister was a key part of Liverpool's midfield, playing 35 times and contributing five goals and five assists. Palmer won the PFA Men's Young Player of the Year award for 2023-24 and while he arguably did not hit the same heights for the Blues last season, he still hit 15 goals and helped Chelsea win the Conference League. —*PTI*